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ABSTRACT

A study of children's progress through the first 3 years of school followed 32 students in 10 schools in the Wellington, New Zealand area. Data were collected through interviews with children, teachers, and parents; school records; and video recordings of children in the classroom. Sections of this report of the study discuss: (1) assistant principals', and first-, second-, and third-year teachers' aims for children's learning; (2) child assessment practices at school entry; (3) teacher assessment methods used during the first 3 years of school and teachers' methods of reporting the results of assessment to parents; (4) teachers', children's, and parents' perceptions of the assessment process; and (5) the relationship between the assessment practices used for each school subject and the suggested assessment practices for the subject. A list of 51 references is provided. Appendixes include a description of the study sample; examples of an information sheet used for a new school entrant and a report from a preschool to a school; sample school entry assessments; and data from two earlier studies on assessment practices in schools. (BC)

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ASSESSMENT AND REPORTING PRACTICES IN THE FIRST THREE YEARS OF SCHOOL

Interim Report to the Ministry of Education
January, 1992

Cathy Wylie and Lesley Smith

New Zealand Council
for Educational Research
1992

New Zealand Council
for Educational Research,
P O Box 3237,
Wellington,
New Zealand.

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SUMMARY

This is the first report from a three year study of children's progress through the first three years of school. The study began in 1989, and will finish in 1992, following 32 children from 10 schools in the wider Wellington area. Material has been collected through annual interviews with the children, their teachers and their parents; school records; and annual video recording of the children at work in the classroom.

In this report a picture is given of the set of assessment practices found in the junior schools of ten schools in the Wellington area. The most common practices were running records in reading, BSM checkpointing and New Maths testing (in the third year), and in writing, correction. Children's own assessment of their work occurred most often in writing. Spelling tests became frequent in the third year, as did more formal comprehension exercises.

Most of the assessment practices were closely linked to the curriculum emphasis and classroom organization of the schools, and were mainly used to diagnose children's individual needs to guide teaching effort, and to group children to provide them with appropriate learning resources. Assessment in reading and maths which was used to allocate children to groups could have a summative effect if children's progress was then gauged by the group, rather than individually monitored.

The diagnostic emphasis of these assessment practices is supported by the research literature on effective learning and motivation.

Teachers generally found the assessment methods they used useful. It is suggested that this is because most were practical, could largely, though not wholly, be carried out within the normal flow of classroom activities, were matched to curriculum, and identified particular areas which might need further work as well as gauging achievement levels. This finding suggests the kinds of assessment methods which are most likely to be most easily adopted in any national system, such as the proposed National Initiative.

Material is also included in this report on the information available to teachers when children enter school, and on the information which parents receive on their child's progress. Parent perceptions of progress are based on the evidence they receive from the school, as well as their own values and beliefs about what and how children should be learning. A gap sometimes exists between the direction taken by schools (which is largely supported by the research literature on learning and assessment), and parents' understanding of how children develop. It is suggested that parental concerns and any shortfalls in parental understanding could be bridged by providing more specific information about both individual children's work, and the aims and methods of their teachers.

Children's assessment of their achievements is also reported: it is often based on teacher or parent comments to them on their work as well as completion of activities, book size, or length of a piece of writing.

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1 - INTRODUCTION

Surprisingly little research has been done into actual assessment and reporting practices in the first three years of school in New Zealand. There is some useful material in the Ministry of Education's study of the implementation of Beginning School Mathematics (Bennie et al 1990), Young-Loveridge's (1987, p 28 -34) research into new entrant teachers' judgements about children's mathematical abilities and in NZCER's three annual national surveys of the impact of Tomorrow's Schools (Wylie 1990 and 1991, and previously unpublished data for 1989 and 1991 included in this report in Appendix 5). The sketch of available assessment methods and of the one mandatory recording system (formerly the Register of Progress and Achievement, now the Primary Progress Record) for state schools in Assessment for Better Learning (1989, p 33 -35) provides a good example of the general state of knowledge of the area. Currently we know more about the range of methods in use than their frequency of use and the purposes to which they are put.

It may be that those researchers interested in assessment have been more concerned with the upper end of schooling and standardised or normed tests such as Progressive Achievement Tests, which only enter into the assessment repertory in the third year of school. It may be, as St George, Chapman and Lambourne (1991) found with their study of Form 1 assessment records, that it is more difficult than would initially appear to derive a comparable picture of schools' practice from indirect sources such as school records. It may be that research and practitioner interest in mapping what assessment actually happens in schools has deepened as policymakers have evinced interest in evidence of achievement, and sought greater accountability of schools for their use of public funds (Brown, 1991).

The material reported here comes from a larger, longitudinal study of the first three years of school for 32 Wellington children, in 10 different schools, which began in 1989. Final fieldwork will be completed by mid 1992, with an interim report on perceptions of progress, and the final report of the study completed by the end of 1992. Appendix 1 gives an outline of the sample design and losses from the original sample of 40 children. The losses are all due to change of school, with no real difference in personal and school characteristics from those who remained in the study for its full length. The description of assessment and reporting practices for the first year of school comes from material collected from 10 classrooms in 1989, and five in 1990; material for the second year of school covers 16 classrooms in 1990, and six in 1991, and for the third year of school, 17.

The material is drawn from interviews with 46 teachers[1] and 10 assistant principals in charge of junior classes, documentation of assessment records, material gathered for the sample children, and annual interviews with the 32 sample children, and with their parents (usually the mother). Our compilation of assessment practices for each school was checked with teachers and assistant principals in late 1991; in some cases, 1989 and 1990 data could not be verified because of staff changes.

The study was designed to provide an understanding of the different facets of assessment in the junior school, and the factors which affect it. It was not designed to provide a nationally representative picture, but it should provide a starting point enabling comparison between different parts of the country. For example, only one of the schools in this study used (part of) the Record of Oral Language, which some observers have expected to be widespread (eg Young-Loveridge 1991, p 15). Material from the 1989 and 1991 NZCER national surveys reported in Appendix 5 shows that in fact that the range of assessment procedures found in these ten Wellington schools fits with the national picture.

As well as being an educational practice, assessment is a social act, and like all social acts, only makes sense when it is put into context. We have therefore aimed in this report to relate assessment and reporting practices to the curriculum aims and philosophy of the teachers involved, their views on assessment, the horizon of existing and mooted national curricula and Achievement Initiative, research analysis both here and overseas of different assessment and reporting practices, and, not least, but perhaps most intangible, the impact the practices have made on the children in the study and their parents.

What is Assessment?

Assessment is essentially a purposeful judgement based on evidence. As well as the more formal assessments reported in this study, junior school teachers make many assessments in the course of their daily work with children which usually go unrecorded. Some would be noticeable to an adult observer (or the video camera which was used in Geraldine McDonald's related study of these classrooms), such as direct comments to children on their work or behaviour. Some may not, such as the hug, smile, question, or extra attention which have their source in the assessment of a child's level of energy, or, say, how well he or she is coping with illness or family problems, or persevering with something worthwhile which he or she finds hard. The evidence on which these informal assessments are based is primarily the teacher's own experience of the individual children, with a secondary layer of

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[1] Some teachers taught our sample children for more than one year; some children had two teachers, either for different parts of the day, different curriculum areas, or because they were in an open plan classroom.

experiences of other children, and, perhaps, other adults' assessments of the individual children involved. The form of the judgement is a comparison of past and present; the purpose, to decide what action is needed from the teacher to encourage or support the child.

Purposes of Assessment

Most of the recorded assessment carried out within the junior classes in this study shared this purpose of clarifying the needs of an individual learner so that the teacher could respond in a way which would take the child further. That response could range from altered teacher behaviour, to putting other or new resources before the child such as the next level of reading books. Often junior school practice is summarised as diagnostic in contrast to the domination of summative, or "final sentence", end of year assessment in the upper secondary school. While this is true for the general purpose of much of the junior school assessment, the form it takes can be summative, such as BSM checkpoints in mathematics, or tests at the end of sections in mathematics workbooks.

Assessment, particularly of this summative form, was also used to allocate children to groups, mainly reading and mathematics, and to classes in the schools in this study. Much of the grouping was 'ability', that is, current working/achievement level. However, movement between groups was not frequent. It was more likely to occur in the first year of school, when groups are generally more fluid as new children enter the class, and near the beginning of the year as new teachers assessed the children. This has some bearing on the resources available to children, such as teaching time or the range of learning experiences (see, e.g. Clay 1979, p 179, and Young-Loveridge 1987, p 58).

The third main purpose of assessment in the junior school classes in this study was to provide evidence of progress. Sometimes this evidence was for the teacher's reassurance of their own unrecorded day-to-day assessment; more often it provided the focus for the distillation of a child's half-yearly and annual academic and social progress into written reports and oral comments to parents/caregivers, and to other or future teachers of the child.

It is also illuminating to look at one purpose of assessment which was **not** used in the classrooms we studied. This is the use of standardized tests to gauge the 'readiness' of a child to embark on school life. While a few of the schools in the study used checklists of skills and behaviours at entry, the checklists were tailormade, and did not decide whether a child was 'ready' to be admitted to school is not. The unwanted negative effects of tests which are also unreliable for the purpose to which they were put when used to screen all children on children's learning and maturity have now been thoroughly documented in the United States. (See, for example, Ellwein et al 1991, and Kamii (ed) 1990.)

The reasons for the non-appearance in New Zealand of these tests, for this purpose, appear to lie partially in the curriculum aims of teachers in the study, especially their desire to 'start with the individual child, where he or she is', partially in the more open-ended New Zealand

curriculum, without school accountability being based on inappropriate and unreliable use of tests, and partially in what one might see as a confident 'can-do' approach, particularly in reading, which is regarded as the main stream of early school learning.

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2 - TEACHERS' AIMS

In our structured interviews[2], we asked the teachers of our sample children and the assistant principals of the 10 schools in our study to tell us their aims, or what they hoped to achieve with the children, and we asked the teachers what were the three most important things they hoped children would learn in their time with them.

Assistant Principals

'Independence', or 'taking responsibility for themselves' was the dominant theme amongst the aims of **assistant principals** interviewed in 1989. Teacher creation of a stimulating and happy classroom environment which would make the children happy to be at school and helping children achieve their full potential followed, and then children's sharing, cooperating, or interacting with other children.[3] It is interesting that those who regarded

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[2] A full set of the interview schedules for teachers, parents and children will be included in the final report of this study.

[3] It is interesting to compare these aims with other teachers. Recent first year New Zealand teacher trainee views of the most important things they hoped to be able to do for children in their class are reported in Renwick and Vize (1991). Enjoyable learning, developing children's self-confidence, and achievement in basic skills were common; but not so children's relationships with each other. Lewis's (1988) study of primary Japanese classrooms found three salient features relating to classroom management: new entrant teachers sought to make the children behaviourally independent in the classroom by emphasizing what she terms 'procedural skills'; they emphasized the importance of friendship and peer relations, building up group structures in the class which enabled the children to carry much responsibility for classroom management, and an emphasis on the whole child rather than on purely academic skills. Lewis cites this stress on the whole child, on social as well as academic aspects, as a likely source of higher Japanese student motivation in comparison to their United States peers. Another writer in the busy field of Japanese: American comparisons concludes that Japanese achievement may be higher because effort rather than ability is believed to yield results; and because interpersonal co-operation rather than competition is fostered, locating a sense of responsibility inside the individual rather than reliant on exterior forms of control (Holloway, 1988). The New Zealand primary classroom, and teachers' aims for their children, would appear from these descriptions to be closer to the Japanese than American, though by no means identical.

their classroom approach as more formal than others nonetheless shared this emphasis on the happiness of children as a key to their successful learning.

All of these broad aims seem to share an appreciation of learning as a dynamic relationship between the individual child and their particular environment, with the responsibility on the teacher to encourage or bring out those attitudes and behaviours which would allow the child to make the most opportunity of their new classroom environment. The first years of school are seen as the foundation years, with a long-term impact for individual children's school and, sometimes, adult life.

First Year Teachers (NE, NE/J1, J1)

A common cluster of interrelated aims was also given by the new entrant teachers in the study.[4] Independence was still dominant, but fleshed out as 'good work habits - able to work without distraction' or 'able to choose'.

> Breaking the apron strings, getting children to make their own decisions about their own learning.
>
> To have pride in their work, to know if they've done well or slacked off a bit - to be able to assess themselves a bit.

It was important that the new entrant children felt that 'school was an OK place to be', that it provided both security and enjoyment: 'They'll be interested in learning if they enjoy it'. It was also important that the children achieved success in their work: 'to know they're capable of producing things', 'to produce to the best of their ability'. Getting on with other children was more prominent in the teachers' aims than assistant principals, perhaps reflecting their day to day classroom experience: 'think of others, not just themselves' 'learn to share, to get on with others in a group', and, a moral dimension, 'learn a sense of fairness'.

What this cluster of aims recognizes is that while children need to be active in their learning, (McDonald et al 1991) the classroom environment which gives them their learning opportunities is largely set. Children's individual differences can only be accommodated within a common framework. In this respect, the 'social' aims of the teachers dovetail with and support their 'academic' aims. (See also Footnote 1, p 4, and Renwick 1984, p100 -101.)

Eight of the 15 teachers noted that their aims were different for each child, according to their needs and ability. It is interesting that these teachers were in schools where a substantial proportion of new entrants came without organized preschool experience, from poor homes

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[4] In two cases, the AP was also a new entrant teacher. Most of the new entrant teachers had been teaching for more than five years, and all were women.

or homes where English was not the first language. Teachers at two of these schools also gave the particular aim of wanting to 'foster an interest in books'.

New entrants come into the school with different experiences and skills. They also come into a teacher's classroom at different times of the year. It is primarily for these two reasons that none of the new entrant teachers set common curriculum goals for their classes. Certainly, they all wanted the children to be reading at a simple level, or close to it, to be able to write some letters, and to have grasped some mathematical concepts such as differences in size and shape, and some numeration below ten. But they would not expect a child who had advantage of the classroom environment for only three months to be at the same reading or writing level as a child who had been in their class all year.

Second Year Teachers (J1, J1-2, J2)

The cluster of common aims was similar for second year teachers. Independence was seen in the context of good work habits, 'being able to use time profitably', 'being able to initiate' 'able to say if they don't understand something', 'able to make appropriate choices', ' to be able to get on with their own work without distracting other children', and 'to use appropriate behaviour at the appropriate time'. This is not a completely individually set idea of independence: it is an independence within the set classroom context, and refers to the children's ability to access the resources there.

> When they're inside, to use inside voices, when they're outside, to use outside voices; when someone's talking to them, know they have to sit still and listen. I think that will help them in later life if they learn that now.

To some extent, this emphasis stems from the limitations of teacher initiation of interaction with individual children because of class sizes (average class size in the 1990 second year classes was 26, ranging from 19 to 31).

> They're still terribly immature and quite dependent on the teacher to do everything for them. But if you go for quality teaching time, you don't have a lot of time for domestic things.

But it also meshes well with the teachers' perception that much of children's learning achievement depended on their attitude to learning and their engagement in learning tasks.[5] It was the role of the teacher to encourage the growth of internal positive attitudes. As one teacher expressed it:

> A very positive attitude to learning is crucial with young children like this, because I feel we set the attitudes for the rest of their school careers - the attitudes that they virtually go through their lives with.

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[5] This will be explored more fully in the next interim report from the study.

This is related to the equally common aim of 'always trying their best in everything'. While a comparison of children's present with their past performance remained as a gauge of this, other comparisons were emerging. The chronological age of the children as a standard against which to set individual children's performance made its entrance for half the teachers. Age is the lynchpin of much standarized achievement throughout primary school, and the ground for the proposed assessment tasks in the Achievement Initiative. Age is not necessarily synonymous with class level.

The other half spoke of 'up to the level of their ability'. This could also refer to 'exterior' standards such as reading book level, or maths checkpoint or worksheet mastery, where teachers' expectations of the range of achievement possible for children have been developed by their experience with previous second year or neighbouring classes.

The common aim of developing social skills was couched in words such as 'respect' and 'responsibility': teachers wanted the children to respect 'other people and their property', 'to listen to the teacher and other children', 'to work with people at their table, to share a sometimes small amount of equipment', 'learn to accommodate individual differences', 'take responsibility for their own actions and behaviours', and to 'have the self-esteem that enables respect for others'.

> Schooling is basically a social activity. You must get on with others, must understand how to relate to others because so much of it is group work - to a certain extent because of the size of the classes.

Half the teachers also expressed an aim which overlaps the aims of independence and 'academic' achievement. They hoped they had instilled in their children the desire to go on learning, (because they were) happy in their learning.

> If a child isn't happy in class, they can get switched off learning quite considerably.

Only one teacher coupled a desire that 'children be keen to do their work' with an equal keenness to 'please the teacher'.

In their more specific aims for curriculum areas, the overarching aim of independence found expression in self-correcting skills in reading, and starting to use a dictionary and checking spelling before written work was shown to the teacher.

Other more specific curriculum aims encompassed children reading to their age level or beyond, printing legibly, in sentences (beginning to master full stops and capitals), expanding the range of their written work, for example, writing longer and/or more imaginative or descriptive stories, and spelling more words correctly. Mathematical aims ranged from the unspecified 'developing the concepts, language and experiences to build on' in one multicultural school in a low income area to the very definite 'finished BSM cycle 8' for

teachers in two schools with little in common with each other in terms of intake (one had a substantial Maori, low-income, little preschool experience intake plus middle-class children; the other's intake came from middle-class, often professional, homes).

Third Year Teachers (J2, S1)

A similar set of aims continued through with most of the third year teachers who taught the children in our study. Independence included the second year meanings of good work habits, 'being organized'. It had stronger associations now also with 'children having a say in their own learning'. Half the teachers who mentioned independence as one of their aims for the year also linked it with a perception of their role as 'facilitator', 'manager'.

> I don't want the children to see me as the provider, but the facilitator of their learning.
>
> I see my role more as being a teacher manager, setting the standards and expectations for children...it's the beginning of their being self-directed.

Again the self-direction is within the context of the classroom, and the standards of the teacher, embodying the adult world to which the children are reaching in their learning.

Linked to the ability to act and think independently was the importance of self-esteem, confidence, or knowing their own worth, so that children could 'have a positive attitude to life', 'be prepared to have a go', 'be free to make mistakes', 'try new things, not stagnate at one level'.

Half the teachers continued to mention children 'showing progress at their own rate'.

Respect for others, and their property went a little beyond the tolerance first and second year teachers sought to an emphasis on solving interpersonal problems: 'a fair go for everyone', and 'controlling their anger'.

The sense of this third year as a transition year between the more 'seamless' curriculum (McDonald et al 1991) of the junior school and the more 'formal' approach in standard 1 or 2 classrooms was marked amongst the teachers, and underlay the emphasis they put on their major aims for the children.

> Next year they're going to a more structured environment, they can't just wander around.

In their specific curriculum goals, for example, they were more likely to set a minimal level which they wanted for all the class, particularly in mathematics. The minimal level was related to the content and setting-out standards of the next year's curriculum. Reading goals

centred round 'fluency', and at least a reading level at the child's chronological age. Comprehension of content became more important. Fluency and longer passages were the two major goals in writing, with mastery of specific grammar goals such as complete sentences set out in capital letters and full stops. Children were also beginning to make the transition between printed and joined handwriting.

These aims suggest a diagnostic assessment environment centred around practices which enable teachers to check progress related to the acquisition of 'skills' more than factual knowledge. The checking of progress is mainly done in two ways: checking present performance against previous performance of an individual child, and checking individual performance against curriculum covered. Often the two comparisons are done in one assessment, such as running records or BSM checkpoints. Reading assessments may also have an inbuilt 'age' standard with which to compare children's achievement.

The checking of progress on 'attitudes' and work habits, such as concentration, is usually done within the framework of other assessments, or through teacher observation, rather than as a separate exercise, unless there are continuing problems in a child's behaviour which suggest calling in an outside health expert (physical or psychological).

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3 - ASSESSMENT AT SCHOOL ENTRY (NE, J1)

Given that all the teachers in the study who taught five year olds saw themselves responding to each child individually, how did they gauge their learning needs? What did they know of the children who came their way?

Information from Outside the School

The main outside sources of information for teachers of new entrants are parents and preschool teachers.

Information from Parents

Information from parents comes both formally, through the material recorded in written enrolment forms, and informally, through conversation with parents when they bring a child to class. Parents were encouraged to bring their child into the classroom for several short visits before the child officially started school in six of the ten schools in the study. While this allows the child to find the first official day less alien than it might otherwise be, and the parent - usually the mother - to absorb something of the classroom atmosphere and, perhaps, its programme, it also allows the parent to offer relevant information on the child to the

teacher (such as interests, character). And it allows the teacher to gain some initial impressions of the child's reaction to the novel classroom environment. The opportunity for information exchange is also made when parents bring or pick up their children.[6]

The written enrolment forms for the ten schools covered practical matters such as parents' names, occupations, work and home phone numbers, contact names and numbers if parents are unavailable in an emergency, doctor and dentist names.

Other information commonly sought related to factors which are known to influence children's initial school achievement: health, home language, and preschool experience.[7]

Health is variably covered. The Principals' Federation 1984 general enrolment form used in two of the schools specifies allergies, medication, sight, speech, hearing and 'serious problems'; others specify two or three items only, usually allergies, hearing and sight. Tetanus injections were specified for two schools with large multicultural low - middle income intakes.

In 1989, when the study began, public health nurses were still doing checks of every 5 year old; this service ceased the same year. Several assistant principals commented to us in 1991 that they felt the loss of the universal checks, and the chance for the public health nurse to pick up other information from parents during the course of their check. The onus is now on schools to refer any individual children for checks. However, area health boards still check the hearing and vision of every child in their first year of school.[8]

Most, but not all, enrolment forms also sought the ethnic identity of the child, parents' ethnicity or nationality, and the language spoken at home. The two schools which did not ask for the ethnic status of the child or parents were both integrated schools, both with very varied intakes.

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[6] One school with a multicultural often low income intake began new entrant teacher visits to the child in their home or preschool in 1991.

[7] A recent and cogent study of the advantages children with experience of preschools enjoy over those who have had only care at home can be found in Clarke-Stewart (1991).

[8] Parents of new new entrants in theory now receive a small booklet which includes their assessment of their child's health, and immunization records; this is supposed to be returned to the area health board for public health nurses to follow up. However, the return rate is low. The unsolicited view of the two assistant principals who showed us the booklet in 1991 was that many of the parents at their multicultural, often low income intake school would not understand it, and were likely to fill it in incorrectly.

Most, but not all the schools also sought the name or type of the child's preschool; three also sought the time the child had spent in preschool.

Children's interests were covered only in the two schools which use the Principals' Federation forms, which asks about private lessons (eg music) and 'hobbies/interests/clubs', and the one school which had a sheet for teachers to fill in after interviewing the child's parent(s). This sheet also covers parents' views on their child's attitude to beginning school, independence from mother, self-confidence, listening skills, reliability and abilities (see Appendix 2). The school has a high multicultural low- middle income intake.

Information from Preschools

Most of the schools had regular contact with their nearest preschool, usually the local kindergarten, and children about to come to school often visited with their preschool teachers, allowing a similar informal channel for information about these individual children to be given to their new entrant teacher. For example, teachers at one school with both a large open-plan, vertical grouped composite class and a single cell class discussed which of these options would be most suitable for individual children coming through from the neighbouring playcentre with the teachers there.

However, the only situation where formal information was passed between preschool and school was in the one school with an attached preschool. A preschool record card accompanies the child to his or her new class, giving teacher assessments of the child's ability in language, reading and mathematics, attitude to work and character (see Appendix 3).

Information within the Class Programme

To adults whose test memory is of hushed rooms, time limits, and responding to written questions or circling multiple choice options, the deliberate assessment practices of new entrant teachers may seem informal or even invisible. Within normal class activities, teachers observe and record individual behaviour, such as 'handles book, turns pages correctly', a simple tick against an activity in developmental or choice time, or notes while a child reads to them. At lunchtime or after school they may make further recordings of observations they have made. Apart from the running records of reading derived from Marie Clay's work, or the checkpoints from the Beginning School Mathematics (BSM) curriculum materials, most of the assessments which new entrant teachers make in recorded form are created within the school, by teachers past and present or the assistant principal. Assessment material used in the new entrant classrooms in this study drew on other material, particularly from the advisory service, and teachers' previous experience within the school or other schools. It was geared to providing material which would be of practical use to the teacher and it could be done quickly or simply.

In the beginning ...

> Children may need a few weeks to settle at school before the tasks [to find out the nature and extent of children's numeracy concepts soon after they enter school] are given.
>
> (Young Loveridge, 1991 School Entry Numeracy Tests)

None of the new entrant teachers in this study would put much credence on the results of assessments carried out on a child's first day at school. In their experience the new and demanding nature of the school environment for most children means that their early behaviour can be atypical, and children's behaviour can also vary considerably day to day at this age, a conclusion also reached in research on children's test behaviour (Smith 1989). By the end of the first month of school, however, all the new entrant teachers had some record of a child's language and mathematics performance which provided indications of what a child could tackle next, or the particular areas in which he or she needed help and practice.

Assessment for **reading** was usually recorded, and drew on skills identified as useful reading behaviours by Marie Clay: could a child handle books, turn the pages correctly? Did they know that you read a line from left to right? Did they know what a word was? Could they recognize their own name? Most scored a child's knowledge of basic words (such as *the, I , am, here..*) drawn from Clay's work, or the teacher's own compilation of the most common words to be found in the beginning reading books used in the school. The score on basic words coupled with successive demonstration of behaviours indicated to teachers that children were ready to start 'independent' reading at the bottom rung of the reading ladder.

Appendix 4 includes copies of some of the checklists that were in use. Number 4 was no longer used by the school in 1991: it was found to be not sufficiently specific to pick up the areas needing attention, especially for children with English as a Second Language. It should be noted here that none of the schools were bicultural; English was the taken for granted language of instruction. All the assessment of children's reading performance in the new entrant classrooms in this study was done in English, and using English words.

Assessment for **oral** language was less systematic. One new entrant class had such material from its attached preschool report. Three other schools did some recording of skills; all three had substantial numbers of Maori or non-Pakeha children, from low-middle income homes, often without preschool experience. One school used part of the Record of Oral Language; the discarded checklist mentioned above also covered oral language (in English) in another; and a third had eight items in a larger checklist, such as 'can speak in a sentence clearly' and 'can ask and answer a question'. The checklist was given within a month of school, and followed up two months later.

Handwriting assessment was often done in the same checklist of reading skills by asking the child to write her or his name. Two schools also gave the children a sheet of letters and

numerals (0 - 9) to copy, and noted any letters formed incorrectly as a guide for instruction. Any incorrect pencil grip was also noted in all schools.

For **mathematics**, the first checkpoint in BSM was used in all 9 of the schools using BSM within the first month to confirm whether the child should continue with first cycle work, or whether the child could move to the second cycle; in one school it was used to decide which ability group the child should go into, within a continuation of the first cycle. The school which was not using BSM gauged progress by correct answers on similar areas (for example, set formation) on teacher-devised worksheets, and used the results to devise the next set of individual worksheets, providing more practice in areas not yet mastered, or moving onto those new areas where mastery had been shown.

Two schools also noted **physical and attitudinal skills** within the first month. Both these schools served significant numbers of children with no preschool experience. One, for internal school use noted things such as 'can use scissors' 'understands and obeys simple instructions', 'apathetic, seemingly content to do nothing'. The marking system was a four point range: yes, sometimes, not always, or no. There was a column to record any change two months later. In the other school, the record went home and may have served a dual purpose of giving parents/caregivers some idea of the school's expectations and programme 'I settle down to work', 'I join in our shared books', 'I am interested in the world around me'. Again the marking system was a four point range: consistently, frequently, occasionally, not yet. Subsequent progress was not noted, and the school has since dropped this assessment and is currently working on something which would show progress between different time points. At two of the schools, other staff also used the Goodenough 'draw a man' non-verbal test of children's general ability for children who seemed from observations to have difficulty adjusting to classroom routine, and settling into work.[9]

Continuing Assessment Patterns in the first Year of School

Reading

All but one school used Marie Clay's running records on a regular basis for each child, though not always at her recommended three-weekly intervals. Some teachers did them more often (fortnightly) for all children, and others more often for children who did not seem to be making as much progress as others coming into school at the same time. In the remaining school, the teacher noted the accuracy of the child's reading of a book at their present level,

[9] One school was no longer doing this in 1991; the remedial teacher in the other thought it was a useful test, particularly for picking up on visual difficulties which might impede reading progress. Neither of the two teachers using the test was registered to use it; neither had read any recent reviews of the test, nor had they discussed its usefulness and reliability for the school purposes with psychometric experts.

and the accuracy of their sight reading of basic (common) words at that level. In all schools, the purpose of the regular monitoring was to decide whether a child was ready to proceed to the next level in the reading ladder, and to identify any strategy or skill difficulties which the child might be having in reading. Teachers felt that children could be moved up or down a reading level, and change groups accordingly; but they appeared careful to avoid demotion. Children were more likely to move onto another group, or, if not making progress, to be joined by younger children.

Most teachers or their assistant principals kept a class record enabling a comparison of where different children were at, and the range of reading levels within a class. Only two teachers however, graphed children's reading progress both individually and as a class, as recommended by Marie Clay (Clay 1979 p 180 -185). Once a week testing of phonics was done in one classroom, and, until class numbers were too large to allow it, individual and class records kept of weekly progress.

Mathematics

BSM checkpoints were more commonly used on a group rather than individual basis, unless a child seemed out of kilter with the ability group he or she had been working with, though children were usually individually checkpointed at least twice a year. Our information indicates about the same level of regular monitoring of activities reported in the national BSM Implementation study, which found a fifth of the teachers in their study monitoring each child at every maths session, and 54% at every second maths session, or once a week. Eleven percent had no regular time for monitoring (Bennie et al 1990, p 126). The school using worksheets continued to use those as a gauge of progress.

Writing

Correction was the main means of monitoring as children began to master letters, and start to write sentences or stories. Teachers in a few of the schools also 'conferenced' regularly with the children, going over their most recent writing with them on a group basis if children were ability grouped for writing, or an individual basis if not, encouraging the children to find their own gaps and areas needing more work.

If **spelling** was seen in the context of writing vocabulary, it was usually checked during writing time. Most schools kept two lists at the end of children's writing books to cover 'words I know' and 'words I almost know', or used Spellwrite (Croft 198) or My Words (Croft 1989) to provide the child with both a mastery and reference list.

Other Curriculum and Social Areas

Teachers made many observations of children's social behaviour and attitudes, and worked to improve those which they thought were unhelpful to children's progress (their own, and, sometimes, others). Some of these observations went into teachers' own personal workbooks for later checking. When we asked teachers questions about the sample children at mid-year, at the start of the study, and again at the end of the year, we were impressed by the detail which teachers could give about each child. (This material will be reported in the final report of the study.)

Other curriculum areas such as science, social studies and art were not usually the subject of individual assessment. Two schools made some record of what the class had covered in the teacher-prepared 'units', and what the children's participation had been. Both forms of recording were very simple: most/some/none, and if used, were used in syndicate sessions to plan further units, or to guide unit preparation for next year's new entrants. Three teachers kept charts of which children had been doing what activity during developmental or choice-time, and used it to steer children who seemed stuck on one activity to others. One school had a checklist for physical education, again simply noting what had been taught, and noting skills on a class rather than individual basis. Oral language work was rarely a distinct curriculum area; children's needs in this aspect were met with encouragement or continued repetition of opportunities.

Child Self-Assessment

Writing was the curriculum area teachers usually mentioned when asked if the children assessed any of their own work. Children were asked to choose their best work in some new entrant classes for 'publishing', polishing a draft for display on the classroom wall, or to take home to parents, or to put in a folder of their work to go onto the next teacher. Some teachers also mentioned responses during writing or developmental sessions when the teacher was not satisfied with the child's work to questions such as 'Is this your best work?', 'Could you make this better?' as a form of self-assessment. Conferencing was also seen as having an element of self-assessment.

Two teachers also mentioned self-assessment in unit work for science and social studies. In both cases, this meant involving the children in setting the objectives at the start of a unit, and commenting at the end on whether they thought they had mastered the self-set objectives. 'It gives them something to try to do for themselves, it increases their self-worth' one teacher commented.

Reporting to Others

Within the School

All the teachers kept folders for each individual child. Usually these contained the most recent running record or score on basic sight words for reading, reading level, the most recent BSM checkpoint in maths, and samples of stories, handwriting, and art. Most teachers updated the samples twice a year, usually in conjunction with their reporting to parents.

In 1989, one school was using the then draft Primary Progress Record, and thus recording progress in science, social studies, physical education and social skills as well.

The material which goes forward to the next teacher of the child varies from the full individual folder, through checkpoints showing a child's reading level and mastery of maths concepts and knowledge without work samples, to class summaries which show reading and mathematics levels. In most schools it was the role of the Assistant Principal to decide class composition from the class summaries, usually based on ability (reading level) groups.

Records kept within the school office were more sparse, and in some schools could contain different material for each child. Generally there was some record of reading level and maths level or coverage at the end of the year, attendance and enrolment data. The draft Primary Progress Record was included for one school.

Reporting to Parents

All the assistant principals and teachers felt that parents could come in at any time to see the teacher if they had a query about their child, or information they wanted to pass on. If teachers had a concern or query, for example, continuing sleepiness of a child, they would either phone parents, or send a note home with the child, often with their reading book (particularly if parents were asked to sign reading books to show that the work had been done).

Other information on children's progress which parents would receive from the school during the course of the year was contained in the reading books sent home for children to read to their parents. Some teachers felt that some parents, particularly those with older children, had a good idea of the levels and colour coding of reading books - though the colour coding is not the same as it was a few years ago. Parents could also gain some indication of their child's writing progress through completed exercise books or 'published' work sent home. Writing books were unlikely to go home until they were full, because teachers did not want to risk losing their own record of the child's progress, and the list of mastered words which the books often contained. Maths workbooks were sent home when full by the school which used them; BSM does not lend itself so well to written work, and so evidence of maths

progress was less likely to reach parents who did not visit their child's classroom. Art and unit work would also go home after it had been displayed.

In most schools, information about the class programme and organization was covered in initial interviews with parents, or left to parents to decipher or ask about when they came in and out of the classroom to drop or pick up their child. Parent (often mother) help, which is also an additional opportunity for parents to see and understand more of the class programme, was used in three of the schools; assistant principals and some teachers in others saw some problems with parent help, including a contradiction with the aim of children becoming more independent. Two of the schools made concerted efforts to inform parents about their programmes through evening meetings, especially where they felt there have been significant changes since the parents themselves were at school, or where they are serving diverse communities. From one teacher at a multicultural school:

> We don't get much parent contact here - partly it's a language thing, although we had one meeting in the middle term to tell people about the reading and writing programme, and it was mostly Samoan fathers who came, which was really exciting. I don't know how much they understood. When I realised, I wished I had had the Samoan teacher here to translate. The next time we do that I'll make sure I do.

All the new entrant teachers reported orally and informally at mid-year to parents of children who had by then entered school. One school also provided a mid-year written report for children who had been at the school for at least a term as well as the more common end of year written report. Only one school gave another oral rather than written report at the end of year for parents of new entrants. Most reports went home to parents (via the children) in the last few days of the school year, though at least one school sent its reports home a week before school closing to allow for parent feedback. The teachers in our study said that few parents commented on or queried the reports with them.

Written reports to parents were often reviewed by assistant principals before their signing by school principals. Teachers drew on their assessment records, such as individual folders, and their workbooks, to write the reports. Although one long-serving teacher could write a report in 20 - 25 minutes, most of the new entrant teachers said they took about 45 minutes. It was common for teachers to focus on the individual child's progress, comparing present with previous, rather than comparing the child with others in the class. It was more likely for teachers to compare children if there were other children who had come in at the same time. None of the report forms had numerical or alpha grades; all provided comments on different aspects as well as an overall comment. The 'technical' terms and shorthands used in the school records (eg 'BSM 2/1') were not reproduced in reports to parents.

The tone of the reports for the sample children in our study was positive. The focus was on reporting what a child **could** do, and the aspects of the class programme that they had enjoyed and shown interest in. A negative summary comment such as 'not trying' did not

appear in our sample children's reports. Where there were aspects of a child's work or behaviour that teachers thought needed improvement, the comments were along the lines of 'Lacks confidence' in a given area or activity, 'Mary[10] seems interested in topic work but doesn't often contribute to discussions', 'beginning to self-correct [in reading], although his difficulties with understanding the story plot sometimes get him muddled', 'Simon could show more concern for others, although there has been a great improvement in his relationship with his peers'.

Four of the new entrant teachers included direct statements of encouragement for children as well as parents (eg 'Well done John'; 'Good start Benjamin - keep it up!'). These children were all low-achievers by the teachers' records. These same teachers also made suggestions to parents of low achieving children for useful things they could do with their children (for example, discussing with the child the content of the book they have read, 'practice with seriation (arranging things in the order of their size)'). The report form for one school (in a middle-class, professional area) gave a list of suggestions for work with children at home, including:

> develop letter games and letter sound associations. Play games like 'I Spy', 'Guess What' and read alphabet books' and 'Family visits to places of interest. Use these experiences as a focus for discussion and language development.

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4 - ASSESSMENT IN THE SECOND YEAR OF SCHOOL (J1, J1-2, J2)

The age range of our 1989 sample children at the start of the second year of school was 5 years 4 months to 6 years, and the length of their school experience varied accordingly. The younger and some more slowly progressing children sometimes remained with their new entrant teacher, or were joined by the new year's new entrants in a new class. School naming of classes varies, and provides no uniform code for parents and others to decipher children's level of achievement. Children in J1 classes, for example, can be reading at the same level or doing similar maths work as children in J2 classes.

Beginning of the Year

Classes were formed, usually by Assistant Principals, from the reading levels that children had achieved at the end of the previous year. It seemed to be the custom in nine of the ten

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[10] The names of the sample children and their teachers have been changed in this report to protect confidentiality.

schools to try to provide each teacher with a full range of 'ability' (the term teachers often used informally as a shorthand for achievement). Streaming, then, did not take place as a result of first year assessment results, at least not at the class level; though the use of reasonably stable ability/achievement groups for reading and commonly for mathematics could be seen as a form of internal streaming, or differential allocation of learning resources.

Children's behaviour and relationships with each other were also used to decide classrooms and groupings. For example, two children whose friendship was felt to distract them both from their work were put into separate classes in their second year; and there was some effort put into ensuring that not all the children who had 'played up' in their new entrant class or demanded much attention of the teacher went to one teacher. In the two vertically grouped classes in the study which covered NE to S1, the sample children did not change class, but, as in other classes, their reading levels were used to group them for instruction. Mathematic levels, as registered in BSM checkpoints or the last module and cycle covered, were used to group the children in schools using BSM for maths instruction.

Again teachers did not believe that first day performance was a correct gauge of children's past achievement and learning level. Now it was because of the effects of summer holiday time, which in their experience meant that children lost some ground, and needed some revision of ground covered on their return to school life. The assessment emphasis in the first few weeks of school was to monitor the children, and to regroup those whose present performance was different from the end of year level which had been used to group them. While teachers used information from children's previous teachers on achievement levels, they were less likely to look at their comments on a child's behaviour or social skills, unless the child was having marked difficulties in the classroom. The reasons for this are discussed later. Some children's reputation preceded them, of course, and second year teachers often had experience of the children coming to them through their playground duties. Where children were having difficulties, teachers would consult with the previous teacher (if in the school) to find out what strategies they had used in an attempt to find the most effective way to handle and encourage the child. Four of the schools had a 'meet the teacher' session in the first two or three months of the year. This was seen as an opportunity for parents to provide any relevant information on the child, as well as ask questions about the class programme. It was not seen as a session for teachers to report on the children's progress, other than settling back into the school routine, because teachers felt they had little to report at that stage. All the teachers felt that additionally, parents could come and see them if they were worried about their child. The same channel of teacher-parent communication existed for the second year of school as the first through comments in the reading books going home.

Continuing Assessment Patterns

The major change from the pattern of assessment practices reported for new entrant classrooms is that most children were given a general test of their language achievement when they individually turned six, or shortly after.

Nine of the schools used Marie Clay's '6-Year Reading Net'. All children were tested in eight of the schools, with coverage in the ninth focusing mainly on children who were not achieving as well as their age peers, and any others there was time for. In this school the net was done once a term rather than at each individual's birthday. Reading recovery operated in all nine schools; and in most the 6-year reading net testing was done by the teacher/s responsible for reading recovery. The main purpose of the 6-year reading net was to identify children who were not reading or writing basic words consonant with their chronological age, and to direct their teaching accordingly. This meant going onto the reading recovery programme where there was room for the child, or providing additional teacher attention and work on the specific gaps or weak strategies identified through the tests.

The 6-year reading net is essentially a diagnostic assessment instrument. In three schools, data from the tests was collated annually by the assistant principal and used to identify areas where children were generally not achieving as well as their chronological age, or achieving in the lower rather than mid or upper stanines (or bands). Analysis of this kind had resulted in changes to programmes: for example, daily writing sessions and more attention to basic words, and changes in class organization which allowed more attention to low-achievers (for example, by one teacher taking two 'classes' at a time, allowing the other to work more intensively with small groups of children, without the distraction of other children in the same space). One school with a non-teaching Assistant Principal had kept summary data showing the range of achievement in each of the sub-tests over the previous four years, and was able to demonstrate noticeable rises in stanine levels over that period which she thought due to this analysis and subsequent changes to classroom programmes and organization.[11]

Children's 6-year reading net results were kept within children's individual folders, and where the school (now) used the Primary Progress Record, results and gaps in strategies were sometimes transferred.

The school which did not use the 6-year reading net, nor the reading recovery programme, had a remedial teacher whose responsibilities included the identification of children who were 'at risk' of low achievement. In recent years, she had shifted her effort to children in the first and second years of school because she thought early intervention was more successful than remedial work further along in school life. This is the same perception that informs the reading recovery programme. In this school, all children were given the Burt word test when they turned six, and if they scored below their chronological age, a prose inventory. Scores were fed back to class teachers, and any discrepancies between their reading group level and the scores discussed, usually resulting in the child being regrouped. The remedial teacher kept the children's results.

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[11] Apparently such monitoring in other schools using the process writing approach has sometimes led to a contrary emphasis on spelling for five year olds, where the 6-year reading net spelling sub-test results have been in the lower stanines. This could be an interesting case of 'teaching to the test', rather than using tests which suit the curriculum aims.

Reading

Running records were continued in the nine schools using them, and were usually done every two to three weeks. One school focused mainly on children reading at the lower levels; otherwise, all children were covered. Results were used to direct teacher attention to particular areas, to decide children's movement onto the next level, and, sometimes, to change reading group. The tenth school monitored reading progress through children reading to the teacher, and weekly testing of sight words for the reading level the children were at. The results were used in a similar fashion as running records.

One teacher using running records also used a Burt word test for her children as a check on word knowledge.

Children's reading levels at the end of the year were recorded in their individual folders in all schools; two schools included running record results, though these are said by their developer to be out of date three weeks after they are done. (Department of Education 1985b p 121). Two teachers did a graph twice a year of children's individual reading progress, and one teacher did a chart five times a year of the class achievement as a whole. One teacher who started to do graphs of children's individual progress abandoned the effort half way through the year due to other pressures on her workload.

Mathematics

Most of the teachers using BSM reported daily monitoring that the objectives of the module had been met, and checkpointing at the end of cycles. One teacher reported checkpointing 'only where necessary'. Time for checkpointing was as much a problem for second year as for new entrant teachers. Teachers in the school using worksheets continued to use corrections of children's work as their source of information on the children's progress.

Writing

Correction of work continued to be the main assessment practice, with self-assessment of the quality of work, usually in relation to the child's previous work, as in 'Is this your best work?' Inspired by a course she went on, one teacher began to involve the children in a daily comparison of their present and previous work, resulting in a list at the back of their writing book of skills 'I am learning to' as a way of providing more structure to her monitoring. Several schools had regular conferencing sessions where children and teacher discussed the children's work, and decided on aspects that needed attention.

Spelling

Two schools now had regular weekly spelling tests of mastery of words which the children took home to learn. Spelling was also corrected and discussed during writing conferencing.

Oral Language

The school using the Record of Oral Language continued to assess the level children were at once a year.

Other Curriculum and Social Areas

There seemed to be little systematic or recorded assessment of work in other areas. Teachers in four schools had done some assessing in relation to social studies and science units. This ranged from oral questioning of the children as a class at the end of a unit, to detailed checklists for a science unit which took a lot of time. One teacher abandoned the checklists for science and social studies she had compiled 'because the children were too young'.

One school had a library card, a checklist with several levels; the first of which could be met in the second year of school.

Child Self-Assessment

As with the new entrant level, responses to teacher questions about work quality, and decisions on publishing or display were the most common examples given. Questions about work quality seemed to become more specific: several teachers mentioned neatness and carefulness as well as the more general 'best'. Three schools started to put more emphasis on proof-reading work for publication, including techniques such as children underlining words which they thought were incorrectly spelt, checking in a dictionary, the words on the wall, or discussing with a friend, and underlining a second time if they remained unsure of the spelling of a word. Several schools got children to read their written work to each other, and encouraged the children to give positive peer review, for example, by thinking of things they liked about the other child's story, and going on to pose questions they had (such as 'what happened to the cat?'). The reasons given for peer review were that it should encourage children to do their best work, help them be critical of their own, and encourage them to extend what they could do, particularly to provide more description and action.

Reporting to Others

Within the School

Our data for second year classrooms was collected in 1990 and 1991. By this time the Primary Progress Record was more common, though it was not found in all the schools in the study. Half the teachers were recording information on the categories in the Record at mid and end of year, one was recording information only once a year, and two, three times. Children's folders held twice yearly samples of art and written work in most schools, though some teachers were discouraged at the lack of interest in or use of the samples shown by their

colleagues further up the school. Again, technical comments or shorthand such as the BSM modules covered was more likely to appear in internal reports than in the reports to parents.

Reporting to Parents

Oral reports were given to parents in all schools at mid year. Some teachers assembled work samples to show parents, and one had the latest running record and maths checkpoint to hand. Most of the oral discussions were brief, though one teacher spent up to three-quarters of an hour with parents. (Only half the parents of her 19 pupils turned up.)

One school gave written reports twice a year; the others once at the end of year. Eight of the reports gave comments on the curriculum areas, social and personal development, a general summary of character, class participation, or approach to life. Like the new entrant reports, the tone was positive, descriptive rather than judgemental, and identified what the child could do, sometimes comparing present with past achievement or approach. Comparisons were not made with others in the class, nor were alpha or numeric grades given. Somewhat more was made of children's contribution to their class, and their 'enjoyment' than in the first year reports.

Two combined brief comments with checklists: one specified aspects of different areas such as, under Printing, 'Can write along a line with correct spacing', and under mathematics 'Can easily understand new work', and had three categories for each item: consistently, usually, and seldom. No negative behaviour or attitudes were included. The other report form gave brief comments on curriculum areas, with ticks or blanks against specific aspects of social and personal development, both positive and negative, such as 'works well on set tasks' and 'easily influenced by others'. This form also provided overall grading of the children (through ticks in one of four columns: very good, good, satisfactory, limited) in three areas: general progress, home study, and listening skills.

Interestingly, there was only one suggestion in the second year reports of our sample children about activities parents could do with particular children to help their academic or social development. This was:

> Marama would benefit from lots of reading practice over the holidays in order to maintain her good reading skills.

Two teachers at one school directed final comments to half their children, praising them for their work during the year, or wishing them a good holiday.

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5 - ASSESSMENT IN THE THIRD YEAR OF SCHOOL (J2, S1)

There were a few changes from second year practice. Most assessment remained diagnostic, but there were moves to more formal kind of assessment of children's achievement in either spelling or reading comprehension in half the schools.

Class formation and grouping on the basis of reading achievement at the end of the previous year remained common practice. One teacher had picked up the Goodenough draw-a-man test from the school's remedial teacher as an interesting way of gaining additional insight into the abilities of her pupils.[12] Four schools invited parents in to meet the teacher, two in conjunction with information sessions for parents (one on the writing programme, and one on homework purposes, to get parents to use the same tools as teachers).[13]

Running records were no longer done for 'high' level readers in two schools. High in one school meant children reading five years above their chronological age. In another school, the strategies, especially self-correction, of 'high' readers were only checked by running records once a term. **Comprehension** tasks or tests additional to the story retelling included in the running records were introduced in three schools, all with middle-class or skilled trades intakes. At the beginning of the year, one school used the Progressive Achievement Test: Listening, and for children who had finished the graded reading series, the Progressive Achievement Test: Reading Comprehension to gauge their reading age (though this is normed for Standard 2, not Standard 1), and provide the appropriate reading material, and at monthly intervals, a prose inventory derived from the Wellington school advisory service; another used a comprehension test at mid and end of year in a more official 'test' format than other schools. The Burt word test was used in two schools.

Five of the schools using BSM in the first two years of school now turned to the **New Growth** programme developed by the Wellington Maths Group for use from Standard one to Form two. The others continued with BSM. In this **New Growth** programme children's knowledge and ability to use concepts ('readiness') is checked before work starts on a unit, and after the unit, checked again to see if they now 'master' the material covered. Gaps in skills and knowledge are covered again if they have not. Daily monitoring of what children cover is also included. Some of the lower achieving children in our sample who were grouped across classes for maths continued with BSM. Basic number tasks of addition subtraction and multiplication were checked in regular written 'tests' in several schools, most

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[12] In fact the test was not designed for this purpose, nor for use by unregistered users. The scoring method and their translation into ages in the particular version in use was also possibly out of date.

[13] In this respect it is interesting to look at McNaughton's et al 1991 report comparing teacher and home strategies for helping children read, and note the conclusion that there was often a mismatch between school and home approaches.

within set time-limits.

Spelling became the subject of weekly tests in six schools, and twice-weekly in another. Teachers in five schools compiled individual lists (usually of about 10 words) for children derived from words they misspelt in their writing as well as words from the books they were reading independently to learn as 'homework', and be 'tested' on at the end of the week. Another school used a common list for the children to master in the same time. In two schools, children heard each other's spelling to test it. Six schools used basic word lists for this age level from Spell-Write (Croft 1983) to either compile spelling lists, or check that individual lists were covering the same ground. One school also tested children at the end of each term, using the spelling levels from Arvidson (1960), and three twice a year.

One teacher did a six-monthly checklist of writing skills, such as the consistent use of capital letters, and two others kept regular notebooks recording for the class what individual children were writing about, and their individual learning needs were.

Assessment of unit or topic work in science and social studies was done on a class basis in five of the schools, usually through discussion at the end. Teachers in one school had a formal scoring sheet to note their impressions of childen's mastery of the unit objectives (knowledge), skills and attitudes, using a three point system to identify complete. partial, and inadequate mastery. One school continued its pattern of interactive learning, with the children identifying what they already knew and what they would like to know about a topic. Another school graded children's work within a unit or theme, with the children choosing the work they would like to be graded on. One school had a formal individual test of facts in social studies.

Child Self-Assessment

Apart from the example in the previous paragraph, children's hearing and correction of each other's spelling, and children being asked if they wanted to share something they had written with others in the class, children's self-assessment remained much as it had been in the second year, centred on written work, and decisions to publish. One teacher had initiated children reading each other's work out loud to the class.

Reporting to Others

Within the School

The Primary Progress Cards were used in nine of the schools, and individual folders including samples of children's art and written work were also kept.

Class lists of reading and comprehension levels, mathematic mastery or level, or test results were also kept in all schools. One school was particularly systematic in collating this material to identify achievement levels across classes, to identify any gaps which could be addressed by future teachers of second and third year teachers, and to plan future unit work. This school had a non-teaching Assistant Principal who also has a strong interest in assessment.

Reporting to Parents

Two schools now sent home written reports twice a year. The format and general language was much the same as for the second year reports, with the addition of more comments on speed, amount, and presentation of work, and on the care with which children were approaching their work.

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6 - PERSPECTIVES ON ASSESSMENT AND REPORTING PRACTICES IN THE FIRST THREE YEARS OF SCHOOL

Differences between Schools

Where schools used different curriculum programmes from each other, they were also likely to differ in their assessment. The majority of the schools in our study were using the same reading and maths frameworks, and they used the accompanying tools of assessment which had been developed to go with them. These had been refined and disseminated to schools through the then Department of Education, school funding for Reading Recovery, and additional staffing in the 1:20 teacher pupil ratio policy. The school which went its own way used the Price Milburn Ready to Read framework, a teacher-developed maths framework which incorporated some aspects of BSM, and, as an independent school, had had no reading recovery training or additional staffing through the reading recovery or 1:20 scheme.

Three of the ten schools had a more comprehensive set of assessment practices in place in the junior school than did others. The amount of systematic assessment done in the junior school classrooms in our study seemed to depend on three variables:

* the enthusiasm of individual teachers and assistant principals, in turn related to their belief that further or different assessment was beneficial;

* the availability of assessment tools which teachers trusted, and could easily customise;

* the time available to assess and record.

Two of these schools had large junior schools, and the assistant principals felt that their size meant that they had to be more systematic in their assessment than others because not every teacher who might teach a child would know the child well as an individual. However, the third school was a small school. Yet two factors which were shared by the three schools were:

* some vertical or mixed age grouping of children, i.e. ability grouping, either within or across classes;

* some teacher release or assistant principal time was available.

However, these two factors alone do not appear to inspire more or more systematic assessment, as they were also found in several other schools in the study.

Teacher or assistant principal release time was used to analyse the assessment records to decide whether modifications were necessary to classroom programmes and organization as well as to carry out assessments. The intake of the two large schools was mainly monocultural, and middle-class; the small school had a substantial Maori, low income component.

The junior school teachers took an ambivalent attitude to cumulative individual records on children.[14] On the one hand, they used and sometimes sought information about behaviour, attitudes and achievements which came to them (often informally, face to face) from preschool colleagues, parents, and other teachers. If a problem arose with a child, or they felt they were not handling a child well, they would look at records passed on from a child's previous teacher. On the other hand, they did not want to 'prejudge' a child, or prejudice the next teacher and their relationship with a child by their comments, based on their experience, and they would often not look at records passed onto them until they had had the child for a month or two, unless the child arrived in their class in mid-stream.

The desire not to allow prejudgement or stereotyping usually applied to children with whom they had had difficult experiences, or who had not made great progress because of their behaviour, such as "dreaming", or "flitting about". There was in this ambivalence two pronounced beliefs. First, that children's classroom behaviour can be influenced by the individual teacher, and change accordingly; second, that children themselves change a great deal at this age, and what could be true one year might be changed in the next. Support for this view can be found in Irving (1991), and Petty and Field's (1980) analysis of the fluctuation in English primary school children's standardized IQ, English and mathematics achievement test scores. The latter's conclusion was that these 'were remarkably unstable for

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[14] This is well explored in Renwick (1984), p 34 - 40.

many children'.

We can also see at work here the junior school emphasis in assessment on diagnosis (formative assessment) rather than summary judgement. Overseas studies of teachers' views on assessment instruments and practices have found similar emphases (Salmon-Cox 1981, Madaus 1981).

Teacher Views and Assessment Preferences

As noted earlier, assessment practices which were straightforward and practical were the ones preferred by teachers. Practical here means providing information about both achievement and the next step, and able to be carried out within normal classroom activities. Assessment related to curriculum covered was therefore more likely to find favour. Salmon-Cox (1981) came to similar conclusions in her study of Pittsburgh elementary school teachers operating in a standardised test environment:

> While we discovered a great "hunger" for diagnostic instruments among the teachers with whom we spoke, we did not find achievement tests used in this manner. Teachers desire diagnostic tests that are precise, closely matched to curricula and instruction, and timely. Achievement tests of the kind now widely used do not match these criteria. (p 634)

The Saklofske and Janzen (1990) report of preferences amongst Canadian elementary and science teachers for their own teacher-made tests rather than standardized tests seems to reflect similar criteria being used.

Running records were respected by the teachers who used them because they were practical on all three counts identified by Salmon-Cox; they were likely to be done regularly for all children in the first two years, and those still on graded readers in the third year of school. BSM checkpoints were less likely to be done for every child: the factor which influenced this most seemed to be the time they took. An additional factor for some teachers working with children who had English as a second language was the language base of BSM, which they felt meant that their children's real understanding might be underestimated.

Work samples were analysed, corrected and guidance feedback to students both individually and as a group within normal class sessions. They were less likely to be included in individual folders, partly because teachers felt they were unlikely to be used by their colleagues further 'up' the school.

We asked the teachers in our study whether they felt they could teach as well without the particular set of assessment practices they were using.

Half felt they could not teach as well without them. Some of their comments:

> I wouldn't be catering for their needs or taking them from where they're at.
>
> It can show you if you thought you had taught something, but few children were doing it.
>
> I couldn't teach as successfully without them, as they become new teaching points.
>
> (Running records) have taught me that I'm not pushing some children as fast or far enough. (running records and checkpoints) allow you to think about a child in isolation, to show personal achievements you might otherwise not consider because they're in a group situation. It isolates problems they might be having with what they're doing.
>
> It makes you really conscious of what you're doing and what they're not doing, and what you can do next.
>
> They're really good at the beginning of the year, your starting point...Sometimes it's good to look back, if you've a concern with a child that you've just picked up, or they're not achieving as well as they could - not improving. You can look over the past, look at what happened last year, see if there's any patterns, or if it's something new...You forget - it can be quite a shock to see just how they have improved. It can actually be quite a rewarding experience because you're working with them each day, and you forget.

A quarter of the teachers had some reservations or ambivalence about the assessment practices they used. The chief of these was the time they took, time which was felt to eat into precious teaching time. Assessment was seen as a task additional to teaching for some of these teachers. The formal recording of assessment results, usually for someone else to hold or collate, was a concern for others. Some teachers felt that either the BSM checkpoints or their school's ongoing record of children's academic, personal and social development were inappropriate, did not capture all that was worth knowing about the child, or could be used inappropriately.[15] The general concern not to prejudge a child, or enable a child to be treated in subsequent years by his or her behaviour or progress in one year was a factor in some of the teachers' ambivalence.

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[15] Brookhart (1991) notes and discusses the same uneasiness about potential uses of assessment results amongst teachers in her education measurement course in the United States, and hence a similar ambivalence about assessment practice which she argues is unhelpful for valid assessment. Her solution is that 'grades [should be used] only for achievement related decisions...teachers [should] help the public interpret assessment results appropriately.'

The information we record we have to transcribe several times onto different cards. I think it's a waste of my time - I think I would be better off in my classroom. I think I probably could teach as well without it. But though I think I could keep the information quite easily in my head, could I retain it when it comes to writing reports? Because I want to make sure my information is as accurate as possible. Parents want to know what their children can and can't do, and I don't think you want to mislead them. Also, those records go with the child - other teachers look at them, and you don't want to misrepresent the child.

Teachers are always consciously assessing and monitoring the children anyway, whether it's written down or in your head. I use the records when I'm writing reports. I'm quite happy with all the assessment we do. It's manageable, it's not too difficult to do, it's easy to store, and we can give it to the children in class time.

You can do thematic work without assessment, but running records are necessary. You need records in open plan teaching where children have different teachers.

I probably could teach without them, but (running records and BSM checkpoints) give you another time to refocus on the individual child, check how he or she is going...Assessment varies in its manageability - we haven't had reading for the last two days because we're doing assessment.

You could teach them as well, but could you evaluate and plan for the next thing? I think teachers with experience can, I know I can, I don't need to have my planning on paper. I can walk into a classroom and I can teach them for a week or two, or for a year, but would I be precisely meeting needs? I think I would, but I can't prove I've done it, and that's what we're going to have to do. We're going to have to prove we've done it, and we're going to be accountable.

A quarter of the teachers felt they could teach just as well without the assessments they used. Considerable teaching experience with some overlap of a more 'formal' curriculum approach were factors related to this view, though they were not shared by all who felt able to manage without systematic or recorded assessment.

I can just sense where they should be by the way they read, the way they ask questions, the way they answer questions, how quickly they write things down.

After you've been teaching for a long time, you don't need all this. Often you haven't got time to look back over your notes anyway. I mean, when you've had a really flat out day, which we do here, you just don't have time to go back over these notes.

> It's time-consuming. I think I could teach them as well, I don't think it all needs to be written down.

It should be said that while seasoned teachers were more likely to be satisfied with their own personal assessment, innovation, refinement or more systematic organization and use of assessment was not the sole province of the younger staff in our study. The 1990 survey of the Impact of Tomorrow's Schools also found no relation between teacher experience and negative views on assessment. It did find that differences in teacher views on how time-consuming assessment was rose with class size. (Wylie 1991, p 106)

Teacher Views on Children and Parent Perceptions of Assessment

Most of the assessment which teachers did in the first three years of school could be done as part of classroom work, or a one to one session between child and teacher in the familiar environment of the junior school. Tests in the sense of a whole class activity done silently, by individuals, within a definite time limit, came in in the third year, usually in the form of spelling or mathematical sums. Teachers were unaware of any general negative reaction by the children to the tests, though they noticed one or two who sometimes showed anxiety. One teacher in the school where there were tests at mid year and an exam at the end of the year took this approach:

> They have never had an exam, they've got them next week, and they are all asking what it is. I tell them not to look at anybody, and to work on their own, and not to talk to anyone, unless there is a question, when they're to come up to me. I make most of the day fairly light, so it can be a fun time. I try to keep it low key so that they are not worked up about it. Some worry at the drop of a hat; the pressure that's put on them [by parents].

We asked teachers whether children were aware of the groups they were in, where these were decided by assessment of achievement. Most thought most children were aware of the groups they were in, but that few children equated their group with their worth or ability. Teachers were also careful to name the groups neutrally, for example, after different fruits or animals, rather than by ranked categories (such as the A, B or C), and several said that they told children who wanted to be in groups further ahead than their own that they would be there with more time or effort. Individual incidents where high achieving children had told others they were reading 'baby' books or weren't as 'smart' as the teller were noted by one or two teachers. However, most teachers thought children saw themselves progressing through the groups as they grew 'bigger' or with experience; group membership was not a summary judgement. Parents were often felt to be more aware of group membership than children. Perhaps this was because group membership was one of the major indicators available for parents of their child's progress, and therefore assumes a prominence which can run counter to teachers' emphasis on the varying speed at which children progress in their first years at school, and their desire not to 'label' children.

Children get to know the groups after a while, who's on a higher level, who's not on a very high book. I don't make it very obvious. Probably parents are more concerned than children at this age.

Children have the attitude that you have to go through stages, and some of the children are slightly younger, so they're still going through the stages they themselves have already been through. I haven't heard any horrible comments about 'you're slow'.. children enjoy knowing that they are progressing - if I say 'You were doing this, and now look at what you're doing', they can see the difference, they know they're improving, and they remember.

They feel that 'he's ahead of me, but I will get there eventually.' They don't ask me 'When am I going to be in that group?' They accept that people are at different stages - that one day it will be their turn, and they will get some people below them as well... I do have parents who want to know how close their child is to the top of the class: 'Don't get me wrong, I'm not pushing, but is he in the top group?' They put pressure on their children.

The children get down the end of the school driveway, the mums are there, they whip out the journal cover, 'my son's reading this and it's red and your son's reading this and it's blue.'

Report writing was, for many of the teachers, a black cloud hanging over the end of the year. Evenings and weekends were allotted to distilling a brief summary of the year's progress from the assessment records of the year, with children's workbooks or samples to hand. Most aimed at three reports a night, usually taking an average of 45 minutes on them. Report writing was a distinct artform, with its own rules: it required teachers to tell the truth positively, in non-technical language. The positive tone derives from teacher and school experience that negative judgements rarely bring improvements in attitude, application or achievement, and a concern that children or their parents do not decide early on that a child will be limited in his or her learning or achievements, and so close the door for good. It was more likely too for any concerns to be broached with parents earlier in the year, and orally.

They take forever - every spare minute from now on is taken up with thinking what am I going to say about this child, that child. I didn't write any on Sunday - I knew this is what I want to say, but this is not the way I can say it. I knew if I wrote it it would be 'didn't, doesn't, should', and that's just not how we write reports... I don't think you could write anything on the last report that would carry through against the child, or come as a surprise - you couldn't suddenly say, Well I'm sorry, Mrs Higginbottom, but your son can't read for diddly.'

Reports takes AGES! We have to be positive though honest with any concerns or problems. Certain things can't be said in reports - for example, that the child still hasn't been taken to the doctor, and that's why he can't hear very well.

> You have to be pretty guarded with what you say at this level, because you don't want to label them. It's not what you are not allowed to say, but what's politic to say. Now I would not say what level a child is reading at, and I don't say what level they're working at in maths, because I know there are parents out there who are going to compare them. I try and make it personal, and I try to make it positive by starting with Johnny has, Johnny can or Johnny does, even if there is something 'negative' to say... I've still got my school reports - and when you know parents are going to keep them, and they're going to become family documents, then you want them to be as truthful as you can, but put in the right way.

Sometimes parents' desire for assessment information was incompatible with the common junior school teacher aim of providing an encouraging, supportive environment: a you-can environment.

> I find it difficult to respond to someone who comes to the door in class time and says, 'oh by the way, how's he getting on?' And he's there, and so's everybody else, and that's when you say 'fine, no problems', or you say 'just fine, are you concerned about something, would you like to make a time to come back and discuss something in particular?'

Teacher assessment and reporting practice, in line with their teaching aims, was based on diagnosis, an open-ended view of potential. Their frequently expressed concern in reporting to parents was that the criteria that parents use to assess their children's progress are summative, and based on comparisons with other children: their older siblings, or neighbours'and friends' children. To the teachers, such comparisons ignored the fine distinctions of age and its impact on actual classroom experience, differences in home support and resources, and the individuality of children, the different rates at which they 'develop', or take in their classroom experience. Teachers had seen children rocket through the first year of school, and 'plateau' out by their third year, achieving less then than other children who initially took longer to grasp the fundamental skills of reading, writing or mathematical concepts. Teachers were concerned less with the rate of progress in the first three years than the continuing nature and solidity of that progress.

Parent Perceptions

New Entrant Level

Most of the 30 parents we interviewed when their children were five were satisfied with the progress their child had made in the first year. Their expectations of what their child should learn in the first year (or less) of school were mostly indefinite. Their assessment of progress seemed to be based on the evidence brought home in reading books and writing books or

samples, or, if they made regular classroom visits or helped in the classroom, at the school. Additionally, they mentioned specific comments made by teachers in oral interviews.

> I go in fairly frequently, so I keep tabs on what's happening. The parent interview is still useful, it's good to have a good ten minutes. [The teacher] tells me which group she's in, where and when she's progressed. She's progressed wonderfully, a wonderful teacher, able to get the next out of each child, she's doing really well with reading, maths and maturity.
>
> I don't really know what progress he's made. His writing is coming on.
>
> I'd like to know how his writing is getting on actually, I don't know the age when they start writing.
>
> He brings home his homework book with teacher comments, she makes comments about his progress. He shows us a star or smiley face that he gets on his printing, or a comment on his printing from the teacher. He's doing well. He could do alphabet and counting before he went to school, and now he's reading, which is what I wanted.
>
> She wasn't doing very well with her reading, so [the teacher] put her back onto simpler books. She wasn't happy about that...she enjoys being at school, she's really very happy, and we're happy to see how she's going...we're definitely pleased with her progress. Ske knows her numbers, she can count up quite high, she knows all the alphabet. Even her reading she's doing really well now.
>
> We're not sure what sort of progress she should have made. It's hard to have a benchmark. She seems to be doing perfectly well, to be competent...I've noticed one child in particular who she sees from time to time who seemed to be further ahead in terms of her writing ability than Emma was, writing stories herself. And the parents of the child made comments on it. I think there are children who are progressing more quickly than Emma - but all the ones we can compare with are going to read perfectly well and reach a particular level. Whether one will reach a level six months ahead of the others, who knows, they're all going to be perfectly competent.
>
> They had the parent interviews soon after he started, so I left it then. But I made a time to see the teacher, and she said he was getting on very well, knows so many words, and so on.

There were also a few parents who felt they needed more information on their children's progress: most of these had children who started school after the mid-year parent-teacher interviews; and there were two parents who felt their children were not making the progress they should.

I've spoken to the teacher twice. Mrs Brent said she didn't know her very well because she'd just started. I think she's improving a lot now, she talks to people now. I haven't had an interview with the teacher because she started in June, and they had interviews right after. I wouldn't mind having one to find out how she is progressing at school.

I'm not at all pleased with her reading. She is very slow compared to my other children. At the end of her first year in school she should be reading. Learning has changed since I've been at school, there's not enough spelling. There's not enough repetition. The teacher tried to explain how things are different in the classroom nowadays, but I didn't really understand what she was saying.

I haven't noticed any progress. He used to bring words home from school at his other school.

I'm reasonably satisfied with Leanne's progress at school, I tend to think that's something the school will monitor as she goes along, and keep me informed about what's happening...I've spoken to the teacher before and after school, I've got a reasonable idea. I suppose I don't really know exactly how she's getting on, I think I probably would like to know more.

The seven parents who had had written reports at the time of interview were with one exception pleased with them.

Susan had made a lot of positive comments, and had tried to find ways of indicating where Kerry wasn't doing so well by putting it in a positive way.

I'm satisfied with the progress she's made...the teacher leaves a note in her reading folder with comments on her progress, and I can keep a check that way...the written report from the school was not helpful. I'm not sure how it could be improved.

Only one parent made a comment about the assessment methods used in their child's school.

I'd like to have a bit more information about the testing. How they do the testing right at the beginning of the year and obviously at points during the year, and the end of the year.

Parents in the Second Year

We spoke with 40 parents[16] of the children in their second year of school. Again, parents' picture of their children's progress came from a blend of:

* the work their children brought or did at home;
* teacher comments on workbooks going home, at interviews, informally if the parent took in or picked up their child from the classroom, and written reports;
* comparisons with other children, peers or siblings;
* the groups their children were in, and
* memories of their own schooling.

Parents' assessment of their children's progress reflected their own quite different experiences, and, in some cases, values. It was easier for them to see progress in reading and writing than in mathematics, partly because of the marked changes in teaching mathematics since their own schooldays, and the emphasis on activity rather than written work in the BSM programme, which means that there is less evidence of progress coming home.

It is interesting, however, that group membership was not as emphasized in parents' responses as its prominence in teachers' views of parent perceptions would suggest. This may be because the parents of second year children in our study were generally content with the standard of their children's work.

> Anna Walls has been good at showing us examples of her work and explaining where she's at in the interview. It's a standard interview - how she is progressing, how she gets on with others, whether she is happy. We talk to the teacher from time to time outside the interviews... we assume that the school would tell us if there was any difficulty. We don't have a clear conception of where she should be, especially in maths. We did ask specifically about that at the parent interview, and accepted the teacher's judgement that she was doing fine... Emma can write neatly, but she usually chooses not to. It's interesting to compare her with a friend at a private school who writes neatly, but there the attention is paid to form, not content.
>
> We only know his progress in reading because he brings reading home. He has improved with reading, I can't tell with maths.
>
> It's good that he brings books home, otherwise I wouldn't know he was really reading. The first term parent teacher interview was good, they said he had been picking up things. He misses out some of his words, and uses others in the wrong place, and I correct him. I don't know about maths because it's done at school.

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[16] This includes parents of some children who moved out of the study schools in their third year of school.

> She's bored, she's streaking ahead, moving at a pace that's quite hard for the education system to keep up with.
>
> Last year's report was helpful, it reassured me that he was all right socially. I liked it about the report that it talked about the weaker points that he's trying to build up. The teacher pointed out to me letters that Shane was doing wrong, and I could do them with him, show him how to do them...I'm really quite happy with his schooling and the progress he's making. He can read quite well now. I don't think they really do much maths at this age.
>
> Things are well explained at the meet the teacher evening, they point out problem areas, you know what to check on. We can see how she's going by the ticks in her book.

Two parents made comments on their schools' assessment practices.

> From the half yearly interview and from her reading we know she is progressing. I would like to see a syllabus that parents could follow up. In my schooldays you didn't have any interviews unless the parent was called up, but you got a written report card with marks in each subject. I would like a mixture of both systems.
>
> The work is good as far as it goes, but her teachers appear not to be monitoring her reading as closely as they might. Sometimes she brings home the same book for four nights, where two nights is enough, she's only consolidating work already done... I did teach her the times table, because I felt she was ready for it, she wasn't being extended in maths, and she had started recognizing patterns.

Interviews with parents of children in their third year were still being carried out and transcribed as this report was written; they will be included and analysed in the final report of this study.

Children's Perceptions

The description below aims to isolate the clues that children were using to tell us in their individual interviews whether they were good at reading, writing and mathematics, and how they knew that they were good (or not good, according to their answer). We will match these descriptions with teacher assessments of the children's achievement and capability in the final report of this study, and also look at any changes in the continuity of children's perceptions of their progress.

New Entrant Year

Most of the children thought they were good at reading and mathematics. They knew this

either because the teacher told them 'good work', or gave them a tick, or sticker or stamp, or because they could do the work they were given. In reading, they could read a lot, or big books; in mathematics, they were more likely to give an answer relating to the activities given: they could do them all, or they could do different kinds. Most children were vague about their writing achievement. Only two children said they were good at reading because their parents (as well as teacher) had told them they were, and the groups they were in were also only mentioned by two children.

> [I'm good at reading] because I can guess the words...[I'm good at maths] because I can do a lot of things.
>
> I'm good at writing stories because I just sound out, and if I'm right, then the teacher doesn't cross it out.
>
> [I'm good at reading] because I can read any book except hard books.
>
> I'm good at printing because I get a stamp.
>
> [I'm good at reading] because I'm reading a lot of the time...[I'm good at maths] because I learn a lot of things.

A quarter of the children did not give clear answers, or expressed doubt that they were good at something. The reasons they gave related to the difficulty they found doing something, or the awareness that what they could do was limited. Two of the children mentioned their group in relation to their perception.

> I can't read yet, but others in my group can, and I've been in school longer.
>
> I went back, I went back to the orange books, like these ones..
>
> I'm not really good at reading because there are some books I can't read.
>
> I hate writing because I'm always doing mistakes and sometimes I do a mistake and I've rubbed it out.
>
> [I'm not good at reading] because I haven't been reading for lots of times.

Children's Perceptions in the Second Year

The first year pattern continued in first term interviews with the children, with less emphasis on teacher feedback through stickers and stamps, and some more specific reasons given, such as 'because I know more words now' 'I can do W', or, for a girl who was writing well, 'I'm not very good because this morning I got lots of words wrong'. One girl said she was good at reading and maths because it was fun. Several children thought they were good at maths

because they knew how to get out and set up the 'games'.

Third term interviews again had less mention of teacher feedback, and more reasons relating to ease of work, amount of work, such as number of word, or in some cases, length of story. Children doing well in mathematics mentioned specifics such as 'take-aways', and counting to 100. There was slightly more awareness of the group a child was in relative to other groups, but children in groups at lower levels than others did not seem to necessarily take their group level as their personal ability. Some children wanted to do the mathematics activities others were doing because they looked more exciting. Only two children mentioned tests in their answers to our question.

> Because I can usually read the story.
>
> [Maths] is fun, I like doing it, I do it a lot, and sometimes I practise at home.
>
> Because I read at school.
>
> I'm all right. Because I can't read up with the Lions.
>
> I don't think I am good at writing, because I can't do stops.
>
> Because Mum tests me on sums and subsets. She's a teacher as well. I'm in the highest group you can get and the hardest. But they're easy. I want a higher group, I want to go into the next class.
>
> Because if I get [maths exercises] all right, I get an excellent, and that means three stamps.
>
> Cause I can see when I write in my book.
>
> Cause I know how to spell every word I write about.
>
> Because sometimes I write about this much [shows length] stories.
>
> I'm quite good [at writing] because when the teacher marks it, there are not that many mistakes in it...[I'm good at maths] because when Mrs Hepworth did a test on me, she said it was too easy.

Children's Perceptions in the Third Year

The material here is drawn only from first term interviews with the children: third term interviews are yet to be transcribed. There is more mention of parents' feedback (where children say they are good at something), getting things 'right' in maths and spelling (most children were moving onto sums, which have correct and incorrect answers, like spelling), and increasing awareness of groups and reading levels as measured by the kind of books children are reading. Only one child used the report to parents as evidence for her answer.

Because when Mummy went to get my report the teacher said I did good reading and writing.

[I'm good at maths] because I get everything about right.

Cause I know all the pluses and she ticks them.

[I'm good at writing] because my teacher keeps on saying "Your stories keep on being neat".

Cause I've done a whole worksheet with hard maths, though I had a bit of trouble with that one.

I'm not really [good at writing] because I hate writing.

Because at home I can read The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe, and it's a hard book for some people at my school...I used not to be [good at maths] but now I am. Well, one day I got it right. I get sums right.

Because I read heaps of books at home and I've got journals as well...[good at writing] because I do harder words.

Because I've read this book and it has small letters in it, and I can read them.

Cause Mrs Young said my printing is improving.

I'm good at writing because I can spell everything, but not, um, not the large ones.

I'm good in Mrs Sage's group because she doesn't shout as much as Mrs Lorne.

[I'm not good at reading] cause when I make mistakes Mrs Mclean says No.

We also asked children whether they liked tests, and, in those schools where they had them, they did - provided they could get a good score. The tests the children knew were short spelling or mathematical ones, without any penalties for wrong answers. They liked the immediate feedback, the recognition they gained for themselves or their team in the form of stars and the like. Tests were an event in the life of the classroom: they could be fun.

If you get five out of five in the Friday spelling test, you get four jellybeans, but they've run out. For two whole weeks she's run out. Lots of people will be getting eight (jellybeans).

I like the tests on pluses; I don't like spelling tests, sometimes I get them wrong.

I like maths tests so I know how good I am.

I don't like the maths tests because they're harder than the spelling ones.

[In spelling tests] when you get six out of six you get a point for your team. I like speed tests because sometimes we get them wrong and it doesn't matter 'cause you [still] get a point for your team.

---

7 - ASSESSMENT PRACTICES IN THE LIGHT OF CURRICULUM GUIDELINES

We looked at the syllabuses for different subjects for the first three years of school to see how well their suggestions for assessment were matched by the assessment practices reported in the classes in our study. In general, the practices are in line with the syllabuses, which give guidelines and principles rather than recipes.

As noted earlier, **reading** assessment practices closely matched the guidelines and tools in the curriculum frameworks they had been drawn from. Teachers were using the information they had from their records to identify children having difficulty learning to read, and aimed to have them reading, albeit not as fluently as others, by the end of their first three years of school.

Guidelines on **writing** focus on the ability of children to 'write in ways suitable to the various occasions on which they will want or need to write.' (Department of Education 1975, p 3). Both originality and accuracy are singled out, in a context of enhancing pupils' ability to judge their own work and others by 'the light of its intention' (ibid). The curriculum guidelines give goals which match the practice of the teachers in this study, but they also warn against any larger standard goals:[17]

> In the primer classes, most children will learn to write several simple, consecutive sentences correctly, and to use capital letters and full stops. Most children will go well beyond this; but it is not possible to say what children should be able to do in any detail, because individual patterns of development and home circumstances have so much bearing on achievement that any arbitrary standard could be misleading. The standard to set is simply the best that each child can achieve with all the help the teacher can give. (p 6)

---

[17] David Philips (1991) paper notes that set attainment targets in writing, including handwriting, could be counterproductive to improving children's writing because of the wide variability amongst children, and the different paths that seem to suit different children.

The 1985 **handwriting** supplement to the syllabus gives five criteria to evaluate handwriting, and says:

> Sensitive and informed observation of each child at work is the most useful way for the teacher to evaluate handwriting...when children have made even minor improvements in their handwriting, positive comments will encourage them to improve yet further. (p 20)

It also commends children's assessment of their own work, emphasizing comparison with model examples, and teacher discussion of 'errors and how to correct them with an individual child, or by discussing common errors with a group' (p 20). Again this was the common practice in the classes in our study.

Guidelines on **spelling** emphasize the mastery of words children use in 'everyday writing', the ability to use a dictionary to check spelling, and above all

> ..each child should become critical of his (sic) own spelling at all times: in other words, that he should develop a 'spelling conscience'
> (Department of Education 1975, p 4)

The **mathematics** syllabus (Department of Education, 1985) sets out objectives to be aimed at over two year periods in the primary school, and gives this advice on assessment (which it also terms evaluation):

> Each aspect (of the syllabus) needs to be evaluated, since success in one does not necessarily indicate growth in all-round mathematical ability.
>
> To obtain an overall picture of children's attitudes and achievement, teachers should assess performance in a variety of ways. Observation of the children at work, and informal discussion with them, are appropriate for assessing work habits, confidence, ability to think sequentially and to communicate, and speed in performing certain processes. Structured interviews with individuals or small groups give direct insight into strengths and weaknesses that might not be gained in any other way. Written tests, too, have some advantages, particularly with larger groups of older children, but the questions need to be carefully framed, and directed at specific learning objectives. Diagnostic tests, prepared by the teacher or published by reputable authorities, are often useful for identifying particular difficulties. Similarly, standardised tests given at set intervals can indicate a child's achievement relative to past performance and the performance of other children in the same class or age group.
>
> Regular evaluation of children's attitudes towards mathematics is particularly important, since attitudes are often the key to success and satisfaction in learning the subject.
>
> Indications of positive or negative feelings may be gauged by conducting informal discussions with the children and by observing their degree of enthusiasm for mathematical activities. Voluntary play with mathematical

> games and puzzles, use of the mathematics table, or reading books on the subject are also indicators of progress. (p 11-12)

The assessment practices of the teachers in this study were certainly along the lines suggested here, with, perhaps, the exception of the standardized tests. BSM checkpoints provided the evidence of pupil progress which this syllabus guideline saw as a use of such tests, and allowed comparison with others. However, unlike the use by several schools of the results of the 6 - year net in language, no school was using one year's results on the checkpoints to refine the programme for those coming on, or to plot evidence of improved school achievement by such programme-diagnostic attention.

The advice on evaluation in the 1984 **Science** syllabus emphasizes a comparison of clearly set unit objectives with 'information ... about the children's level of mastery of the more important cognitive objectives and development of attitudes' (p 46). It suggests planned oral questioning, informal observation using 'simple clues such as facial expression, tone of voice and concentration' (p 46), and notes that checklists and rating scales could be used to record observations. From discussions with children may be gained benefits such as information about children's thinking modes, 'information that cannot be obtained from traditional tests'. It warns, however, that

> Discussions are time consuming and even when carefully constructed allow only for a sampling of objectives with a limited number of pupils. They may favour verbally fluent children and information gathered by this method should be supplemented with information gathered by other techniques. (p 47)

The same warning is given for written tests.

The 1991 reprint of the 1981 **Social Studies** syllabus comes without guidelines for evaluation/assessment.

It seems fair to say that assessment of thematic or unit work in science and social studies was largely unsystematic in the junior classes in this study. Few of the teachers both consistently set objectives for each unit, and then gathered the information which would allow full evaluation at the end of the unit. To do so would require more time devoted to planning and assessment: and time was the one resource which all teachers felt they were short of. Even if suitable and acceptable curriculum and assessment resources were developed by people outside schools, the advice contained in the curriculum statements and guides would suggest that reliable assessment in these fields could only be done by devoting more classroom time to the actual assessment.

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8 - TOO MUCH, TOO LITTLE, JUST RIGHT?

In this concluding section, we look at the assessment practices and perceptions reported here in the light of other relevant research, and advance some thoughts as to the lessons we can learn from this material.

How does one assess assessment? The question is unavoidable in the present climate of interest in assessment. To put the practices charted here into the deeper picture of what research has uncovered about the nature and usefulness of assessment is a chastening journey for anyone looking for certainties, or perfect solutions.

First, the assessment practices described here are in line with the good practice identified by research on what works most effectively to improve learning, in relation to the particular curriculum and social goals held for children. From recent writings on motivation (Dweck 1989), the impact on student motivation, learning strategies and achievement (Crooks 1989) one learns of the importance of assessment which diagnoses, which analyses and provides feedback on cognitive processes as well as product, and which encourages effort and attempt. The diagnostic, or formative, aim is certainly alive in much of the assessment found in the junior school classrooms in this study, as is the grasp of the importance of internalizing motivation, motivation based on a willingness to try (and therefore, risk, or respond to, failure).

Most of the assessment is focused on individual learners as individuals. Few schools were providing or analysing data on a classroom or age basis to provide another perspective on their curriculum aims or teaching practices. There are perils in doing so without a full understanding of what can and cannot be generalised from such findings, and in ensuring that the results serve the curriculum aims rather than gearing the curriculum to serve what could turn out to be unreliable or inappropriate methods of assessment. But if these dangers can be avoided, this would appear to be a worthwhile form of school self-appraisal.

Grouping practices are perhaps the most summary uses of assessment in the junior school, and the question here, which we hope to address in our final report, is whether or not they allow children to miss some of the learning opportunities they need or could benefit from.

What most of the assessment practices found in the junior school classrooms in this study have in common is that they fit with the curriculum emphasis and curriculum resources, teaching methods, such as the common grouping of children by achievement levels, and teaching philosophies. They can often be done within the ordinary flow of the classroom activities. Professional judgement as to frequency, and, sometimes, form, can be exercised. They are relatively 'user-friendly' without being mechanical exercises.

The next question which arise then, are the reliability of the practices. From recent research

and analysis of what actually happens in classrooms, including the new English national assessment tasks and the seemingly uniform standardised tests of the United States (BERA Policy Task Group on Assessment 1991, Broadfoot et al 1991, Torrance 1991, Wodtke et al 1989) one learns that what looks like the same assessment tool operates differently in different classrooms, producing different results for children who might, if all evaluated together, seem very similar in competence and/or product. While repeating the same assessment with each child makes it reasonably reliable for that child, the differences between classrooms and schools still make interclass and interschool comparisons unreliable.

This raises questions at two levels. First, any national system of assessment, such as the recently piloted British system, runs the risk of making comparisons between both children and schools which are in fact unreliable. It is impossible to combine diagnostic and summary assessments in the same instrument without undermining one of the two aims. This is discussed in much of the literature cited in this section, and recognized in the separation of national monitoring and individual assessment in the proposed Achievement Initiative.

Second, do the currently de facto national assessment methods of running records in reading, the 6-year reading net and BSM checkpoints operate differently in different classrooms also, producing objective seeming results that may in fact be less comparable than they seem on the surface? Glynn et al's 1989 study of reading recovery found

> 'a substantial number of cases in which children seemed to be incorrectly placed in their classroom reading programmes. By no means all of these were target children after discontinuation' (p 130).

These were children for whom running records were being done on a regular basis. The researchers' concern was that despite the seeming 'objectivity' of the assessment methods, and the diagnostic intentions, children could miss out on the learning opportunities they needed to make or consolidate progress. They recommended more 'careful' monitoring. But it may be that it is the assessment tools themselves which need monitoring. The spelling sub-test of the 6-year reading net, for example, may not be appropriate to the asssessment of the achievement levels of those exposed to different methods of teaching writing.

From the cumulative analysis of the match between the aims of assessment tools and what they actually measure, or describe, one learns that many fall short, and may mislead, or limit what could be achieved (Broadfoot 1991, Raven, 1991, Willis 1990, and, for the BSM checkpoints, Irwin 1990 and Young-Loveridge 1991a and 1991b). More assessment is counter-productive if it does not shed better light on the more complex knowledge and competencies which many people are demanding. We do not necessarily agree with the child who says she is good at reading because she is reading more words.

One wonders also, whether, like the changes in what constituted 'reading age' between the

1955 and 1974 Burt reading tests (Croft 1980), a re-norming of the stanines and reading ages used for running records and prose inventories, would mean a similar upping of the ante in what is required of children to get the same 'age'. Or, in other words, whether our expectations of what children can achieve will rise, and yet appear to be matched to an identical yardstick. Such a trend is well documented in IQ assessment over the last thirty or so years (Flynn 1985). This means, amongst other things, that comparisons across time are no longer of the same thing.

There are several lessons which could be learnt from the material reported here in relation to current policy initiatives. As far as the Achievement Initiative is concerned, it would seem useful to design assessment methods which junior school teachers find 'user-friendly' as well as useful, so that they stand the best possible chance of being readily implemented and used to enhance the learning opportunities available to children. Our conclusion is that such methods should be practical, not too time-consuming to carry out or record, directly relevant to the existing curricula and classroom work with individual children, able to be readily incorporated into classroom programmes and organization, and able to some extent to be 'customised' by classroom teachers. The latter trait also fits well with the increased emphasis in educational administration on decentralization and school self-management.

The second is the discovery that some teachers were using inappropriate tests, such as those normed on a higher age group, or designed for a different purpose other than the one to which they were being put. Some teachers were also using tests for which they lacked certification. Assessment developers and researchers have been worried about the gap between the technical aspects of their craft and teachers' appreciation of the reasons and importance of these aspects, so that they can choose tests which are appropriate for their own ends. (e.g. Gullickson 1984). Renwick and Vize's (1991) study of teacher trainees indicates that while trainees were perhaps learning more about assessment techniques than the reasons for assessment, more coverage of both might be advantageous (p 108). It would be very useful to have a research study on what inservice assessment training is available, and how effective it can be.

Reporting to parents has received new emphasis in the **Tomorrow's Schools** environment. The teachers and parents in our study sometimes saw different evidence on children's progress, sometimes put the evidence into different contexts to make sense of it, or misread each other's information requirements. Some bridging of the gaps would seem highly desirable. Some of the schools in our study were already working to give parents a clear picture of what happens in their child's classroom, and why. Some similar work on individual children's progress and achievements might a'so be highly desirable, particularly where the parent could play a complementary role in providing support or extension. It is not an easy job; but it needs to be done, and done with the care and imagination which so

many of the teachers in our study were bringing to their work with children in the classroom.

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APPENDIX 1 - SAMPLE DESIGN

Schools

The school sample was chosen to give a wide range of schools. Salient characteristics of the ten schools are:

* A large[1] full primary school in the state system, mainly Pakeha/European, a middle class intake, and 1:20 staffing;

* A large integrated full primary Catholic school with a wide range of ethnic and socio-economic backgrounds, and 1:20 staffing;

* A medium size state contributing school whose children come mainly from a low socio-economic background and diverse ethnic groups;

* A large state full primary school with a mainly Pakeha/European, middle class intake, and 1:20 staffing;

* A large independent full primary school whose children come from a range of social backgrounds. A high minority are Asian;

* A medium size integrated contributing Catholic school, whose children come mainly from low - middle income homes, a wide range of ethnic backgrounds, and 1:20 staffing;

* A medium sized state full primary school drawing from a middle-class neighbourhood with a largely Pakeha/European population, and 1:20 staffing;

* A large state full primary school with a mobile population. A divergent ethnic and socio-economic population although there are few affluent families. 1:20 staffing;

* A small state full primary school, whose pupils are largely from low socio-economic backgrounds, with a substantial Maori component.

* A small state full primary school with a high Maori roll. A few children come from affluent or professional families but many do not.

Children

See McDonald et al (1991) for a fuller description of the original sample design of a total of 40 children, four from each school. At the end of 1989 the sample comprised 35 five year olds in 10 classrooms. In the third term 1990 the sample was 39 children in 18 classrooms of whom 30 were six year olds from the original sample and 9 five year olds added in Term 1 1990. At the end of 1991 32 children [16 girls, 16 boys] remained in 18 classes - 23 seven year olds and 9 six year olds.

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[1] 'Large' here means a roll over 200; medium a roll between 100 - 200, and small, less than 100.

Of the 44 children in the sample from 1989 to Term 3 1991 a total of 12 have left the schools, 10 to other schools in the greater Wellington area. It is difficult to detect any pattern emerging by ethnic group, socio-economic class, parental occupation, family composition or housing tenure. Two-thirds of those who moved were girls. The only school which retained its original four children in our sample was a Catholic school serving a diverse ethnic and socio-economic population.

The possibility of following up the children who had left the schools was raised with the study advisory committee in Term 1 1991. Although only two had left the district a number of problems still emerged: the loss of data in the elapse of time , the difficulty of gathering comparable data on the schools the children had moved to, and primarily, the lack of resources. It was decided that the investigation of children who moved was practically a separate study in itself. However, the loss of 12 of 44 children who were at some stage part of the sample should be noted.

APPENDIX 2

(SURNAME) _____ (CHRISTIAN NAME/S) _____ (DOB) _____

Place in family: _____

Health: _____

Pre-school Education: _____

Time spent (at Pre-school): _____

Attitude to beginning school: _____

Independence (from Mother): _____

Self-confidence: _____

LISTENING SKILLS: (enjoyment of stories) _____

(Read to daily) _____

(Listening to directions) _____

RELIABILITY: (Able to carry out instructions) _____

(A small task) _____

INTERESTS:	Drawing	☐	Bike	☐
	Colouring-in	☐	Ball	☐
	Imaginative Games	☐	Lego	☐
	TV	☐	Toys	☐
	Books	☐	Music/Dance	☐
ABILITIES:	Print own name	☐	Counts to ten	☐
	Knows Nursery Rhymes	☐	Recognises front of book	☐
	Colours	☐	Draws picture of self	☐
	Holds pencil correctly	☐	L to R	☐

ESL	YES / NO		Born in NZ	YES / NO
ENROLMENT FORMS:	Enrolment	Y / N	Baptismal	Y / N
	Health	Y / N	Preference	Y / N
	Dental	Y / N		

OTHER CONCERNS: _____

_____

APPENDIX 3

PRE SCHOOL RECORD CARD

Name _____ Boy/Girl

Date of birth _____

Date of entry _____

Father's occupation _____

Address _____

Mother — Home / Working

Home telephone _____

Contact telephone Father's Bus _____

Other siblings at school _____

Language of environment _____

Notes on Entry

(Use qualitative terms — good / poor)

Health and Physical Development

Speech Good Sight Good Hearing Good

Hand to eye co-ordination Fairly Good Left handed / Right handed ✓

Adjustment to School Life

Settles to play Good

Social adjustment Good Reaction to discipline Good

Notes on Classroom Activities

(Use qualitative terms — good / poor)

A. **Development of Language**

Ability to express himself (a) to teacher Good

(b) In a group Good

Ability to interpret pictures Good

Ability to speak in sentences Good

Ability to dictate stories for pictures and painting Good

Ability to copy over captions ✓

Ability to copy under captions Good

B. **Development of Art** Very Good

C. **Development of Reading**

a. **Pre Reading**

Ability to match like pictures ✓ Ability to match like shapes ✓

Ability to match like colours ✓

Ability to perform simple jigsaws ✓

Ability to perform harder jigsaws ✓

Ability to recognise name ✓ Ability to recognise colours ✓

Ability to print name ✓

Interest in books and stories Good

Ability to predict outcome of ideas in a story Good

Expression of own ideas Good

Ability to listen and follow directions Good

b. **Reading** (Departmental Readers)

Early in the Morning Grandma Comes to Stay 3rd-time

The Fire Engine

D. **Mathematics** (Section One)

a. **Equivalence**

Colour Size Shape Pattern

b. **Size**

Comparison (Vocab.) Simple seriation

c. **Shape**

Jigsaws Form Boards Templates

APPENDIX 4 - 1

EARLY READING CHECK LIST

CHILD'S NAME: _____ D.O.B. D.O.A.

		DATE and/or Comment	19-4
		19-2-90.	
1.	Likes to look at picture books.	yes	✓
2.	Likes to listen to stories read.	yes	✓
3.	Likes to draw things he knows.	Sometimes	✓
4.	Occasionally expresses curiosity about certain bits of print.	no.	✓
5.	Is beginning to use pictures as clues.		yes.
6.	Can memorise certain poems and recite them.	yes.	✓
7.	Consistently holds books right side up.	yes.	✓
8.	Can follow words on a chart from left to right.	yes.	✓
9.	Can follow words spoken with printed words on the line.	yes.	✓
10.	Can speak clearly in sentences.	yes.	✓
11.	Can sustain attention and sit still at least 5 - 10 minutes during a story.	yes.	✓
12.	Can identify a sentence in print or on a chart.	19-4-90	
13.	Can make inferences from pictures.	yes.	✓
14.	Can discuss sequence in pictures.	yes.	✓
15.	Can remember the proper sequence of at least some of the events of a story.	yes.	✓
16.	Knows a small core of basic sight words.	no.	yes.
17.	Expects what he reads to sound meaningful and sensible.	no.	✓

		DATE 19-2-90	19-4
LANGUAGE - Oral			
1.	Can speak in a sentence clearly	yes.	✓
2.	Can speak using several correct sentences	yes.	✓
3.	Takes part in discussion (give and take).	yes.	✓
4.	Can talk to a small group.	yes.	✓
5.	Can ask and answer a question.	yes.	✓
6.	Can tell or re-tell a story or poem.	yes.	✓
7.	Can carry or deliver an oral message.		too sh
8.	Can interpret and predict from a picture or story.	yes.	✓
COMMENT			
Asks little. Has very little to offer at			
written language time.			
LANGUAGE - Written			
1.	Can record pictorally.	Sometimes yes.	✓
2.	Copies own name.	yes.	✓
3.	Copies under caption.	no.	no
4.	Reads the captions back to teacher.	yes.	✓
COMMENT			
Very few ideas of his own.			
19-4-90. Ideas still very limited in written work.			
SOCIAL/EMOTIONAL			
1.	Very dependent on adults, timid, easily upset.	no.	
2.	Apathetic, seemingly content to do nothing.	no.	som
3.	Easily distracted, restless, constantly fidgets and squirms.	no.	
4.	Will play happily with other children, will share equipment, personal possessions etc.	yes.	
5.	Unable to cope with new experiences, easily upset.	no.	
6.	Confidence - talks to adults confidently - generally shows self-confidence.	not always	le in
COMMENT			
19-2-90			
Passive participant in class activities.			
19-4-90.			
Is beginning to show some initiative in a one to one situation.			

SCHOOL

Observation of New Entrant.

CHILD'S NAME D.O.B. D.O.A. DATE DAT

	INTELLECTUAL	19-2-90.	19-4-
1.	Uses names of familiar objects.	yes.	✓
2.	Understands and obeys simple instructions	yes.	✓
3.	Comprehends simple questions and gives sensible answers.	yes.	✓
4.	Can repeat a story without much difficulty.	Sometimes	yes.
5.	Recognises his own name.	yes.	✓
6.	Can tell sex differences e.g.,(boy,girl)	yes.	✓
7.	Holds pencil and can imitate vertical and circular strokes.	yes.	✓
8.	Can copy circles.	yes.	✓
9.	Draws primitive "man" showing head and legs.	yes.	✓
10.	Draws recognisable "men" and "houses".	yes.	✓
	COMMENT		
	PHYSICAL OR MOTOR		
1.	Can use scissors.	yes.	✓
2.	Can thread.	yes.	✓
3.	Can do simple jigsaws and puzzles.	yes.	✓
4.	Strong tendency to right/left handedness.	right.	✓
5.	Can keep within lines when colouring.	yes.	✓
6.	Can copy his own name.	yes.	✓
7.	Is generally well co-ordinated.	yes	✓
	COMMENT		

APPENDIX 4 - 2

UNDERSTANDING	BEHAVIOURS	UNDERSTANDING	BEHAVIOURS	UNDERSTANDING	BEHAVIOURS
Reading is an enjoyable, purpose-ful activity. Enjoys books independently DATE _____ MAINTAINED _____ DATE _____	Child chooses to 'read' in the book area and signs and song charts, etc. displayed around the room.	The picture is a guide to the message. DATE _____ MAINTAINED _____ DATE _____	Child invents sentences to interpret print supported by pictures.	Book language is different from oral language. DATE _____ MAINTAINED _____ DATE _____	Child uses book language in the sentences he/she invents.
1. Print can be turned into speech. DATE _____ MAINTAINED _____ DATE _____	Child indicates the print when asked where the story is written.	The text conveys a constant message. DATE _____ MAINTAINED _____ DATE _____	Child almost memorises the text of a familiar book when retelling it.	2. Books read front/back. Print written left/right, top/bottom. DATE _____ MAINTAINED _____ DATE _____	Child can turn book to front and turn pages one at a time. Indicates where to start reading and moves finger under the line.
3. Speech is segmented into words - spoken word matched to written word. DATE _____ MAINTAINED _____ DATE _____	Child can point to words matching 1 to 1 as he/she reads a familiar text.	Words are composed of letters in a set sequence. DATE _____ MAINTAINED _____ DATE _____	Child writes words accurately.	4. Any word has a constant representation in print DATE _____ MAINTAINED _____ DATE _____	Child recognises own name and some other words.

APPROACHES USED TO DEVELOP THE ABOVE UNDERSTANDINGS

- Teacher Reading
- Shared Reading
- Independent Behaviour with Books
- Language Experience
- Writing

MONITORING

- Sensitive Observation
- Running Records
- 6 Year Old Diagnostic Survey

APPROACHES WHEN ABOVE UNDERSTANDINGS ARE CONSOLIDATED

- Teacher Reading
- Shared Reading
- Independent Reading
- Language Experience
- Writing
- Guided Reading

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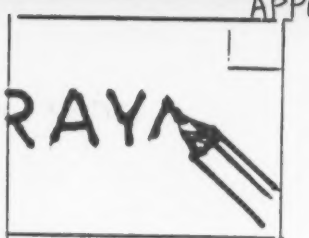
APPENDIX 4.

I can hold a pencil correctly.

I can recognise my name.



I can write my name.

I follow directions.

I settle down to work.

EXPLANATION OF MARKS

C Consistently

F Frequently

O Occasionally

N Not yet

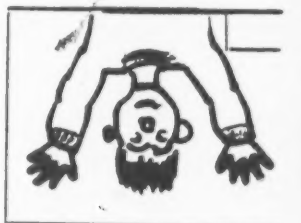
I like to look at books.

I join in our shared books

I can listen to stories attentively.

I can work quietly and independently

I finish my work.

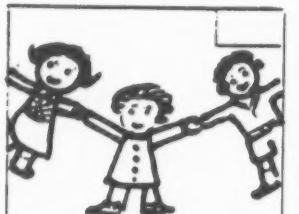

I can always find something to do.

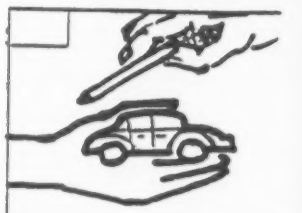
I can express myself well orally.

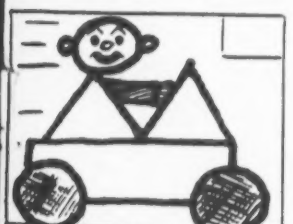
I listen when others speak

I am interested in the world around me

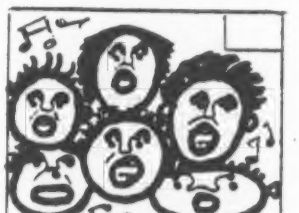
I can think for myself.


I work and play well with others


I recognise the rights and property of others


I know how to use Maths equipment.

I take part in art activities


I sing with the class

I enjoy physical activity.

I can use the scissors

I help in the classroom

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with thanks to 70 for illustrations

APPENDIX 4 - 4

Wanganui Reading advisers

EARLY READING - ENTRY BEHAVIOUR CHECKLIST

This checklist was compiled by the Wanganui Reading Advisers, to ai teachers in evaluating the Early Reading behaviour of New Entrants.

It is not anticipated that the list will be used in a formal testing situation but rather in the whole class, small group or 'incidental' teacher/pupil interaction.

Teachers may feel that some New Entrants will be quite happy to be tested in a formal situation - 1:1 on their first day, and if this is so, teachers should feel free to do so.

Emphasis is placed on evaluation of each new entrant as early as possible after entry so that lacking skills may be taught as soon as possible.

F = Formal
I = Informal

		Child's Name	
I or F	AUDITORY MEMORY 1. Can follow directions - for example: "Go to the door and shut it please."		
I or F	2. "Listen and then say this little rhyme - I can smile You can smile Smile, smile, smile."		
I or F	VISUAL DISCRIMINATION 3. "Bring me your name card." Recognition of name in set of four.		
I or F	4. Can see word likenesses and differences - a) "Show me two the same - see, up, see." b) " " " one that is different/one that is not the same - come, here, come."		
Preferably F	ORAL LANGUAGE FACILITY 5. Acceptable language patterns - Ask the child "Where do you live?" His reply will give some indication of development.		
F	6. "Tell me about this picture". Could be the child's jigsaw or a classroom picture on the wall. (Used Departmental picture - coloured - 4 children with pets).		
F	7. The child to tell a story from three, no more than four, well-known and clearly sequenced pictures - e.g. from the 3 Little Pigs.		

F	8. "Tell me a story/or a nursery rhyme/or a TV advertisement/something about himself."		
I or F	KNOWLEDGE OF BOOKS AND BASIC READING/ WRITING EXPERIENCES 9. Is the child able to handle a book correctly?		
Informal Only	10. Is he able to sit through the telling/ reading of a story?		
I or F	11. "Show me the picture; now show me where to start reading". - Starting point.		
I or F	12. "Point to the words as I read". Use a familiar story or the child's caption.		
I or F	13. Has L - R		
I or F	14. Return sweep -		
I or F	15. 1--1 (Child should do the reading) -		
I or F	16. "Show me a word that you know; what does it say?" (Use a picture caption or the child's caption).		
I or F	17. Identify a book by its cover. "What is this book about?" - e.g. The Gingerbread Man.		
Preferably F	18. "Write (draw) your name". (Christian name usually but some children may write both.		
Preferably F	19. Knowledge of alphabet letter names in their own name. Use either the child's copy if accurate, or write for them and then check.		
I or F	20. Is able to predict a logical word in an oral CLOZE situation - e.g. "The little boy fell and hurt his _____"		

APPENDIX 5 - MATERIAL FROM 1989 AND 1990 NZCER SURVEYS

Several of the questions asked in the 1989 and 1991 NZCER national surveys of the Impact on Tomorrow's Schools in primary schools and intermediates have material relevant to the exploration of assessment and reporting practices in the first three years of school.

In 1989, two-fifths of the new entrant teachers who completed the teacher questionnaire in the survey mentioned no source of information on pupils entering their class. About half the new entrant teachers reported that they had had information from children's preschools.

Teachers were also asked in a set of open-ended questions to 'Please note the methods you use for information..' related to different purposes to which assessment can be put. Tables 1 and 2 give the responses for new entrant only teachers, NE-J1 and J1 teachers, J1-2 and J2 teachers, and J3/S1 teachers. The inclusion of PAT tests at the new entrant level, when the NZCER survey of use of its tests would indicate very little use indeed at this level (Croft and Reid 1991) and a surprisingly high level of discussion with a child's previous teacher to prepare a profile of the child for the teacher to come may indicate that teachers answered as generic teachers, rather than simply reporting on their own particular classroom practice. Nonetheless, some interesting data emerges which largely confirms the picture of junior school assessment gained by the more contextual and qualitative study in the ten Wellington schools. It also raises some intriguing questions about the different uses of different kinds of assessment, particularly for reporting to parents and other teachers which we hope to explore further in our final report.

Table 3 gives similar data from the 1991 survey results of the assessment procedures used by teachers. Just over a third of the teachers reported changes in the procedures they used since 1990, and almost two-thirds said there had been an increase in the amount of assessment they did. While 45% of the new entrant teachers, and 56% of the junior teachers felt this gave them a better picture of individual children's learning needs, 28% of the new entrant, and 33% of the junior teachers felt that it gave them less time to attend to individual children's learning needs, and a quarter of teachers at both stages felt it had increased their workload. Other effects of increased assessment reported by some teachers were increased parent confidence, closer relationships with parents, and an increased understanding of their pupils. Reporting to parents had also been increased since 1990 by 26% of the new entrant, and 31% of the junior teachers in the survey.

Table 1

Junior School Teachers' Use of Common Assessment Methods reported in NZCER's 1989 survey

Purpose / Method	Running records %	Work samples %	Observations %	Check-points %	Discussion with previous teacher %
Group children	77 88 87 86	32 32 21 39	55 72 63 75	71 76 68 43	3 3 0 4
Place children in class	41 26 25 16	25 16 13 13	31 42 31 29	31 13 31 29	6 3 3 7
Shape teaching strategies	63 40 37 39	38 21 17 32	72 51 49 48	47 42 35 30	6 3 0 4
Confirm own observations, feelings	50 42 51 34	31 18 17 18	3 3 6 7	6 6 7 11	34 18 21 21
Select child for individual help	53 49 56 55	31 18 17 31	56 55 58 71	28 37 32 22	13 6 3 4
Monitor individual's progress after help	53 44 44 45	34 18 24 38	59 50 62 67	0 3 3 5	44 32 39 15
Profile for next teacher	59 53 54 48	22 28 21 23	25 15 16 7	13 13 11 14	53 34 43 29
Report to parents	53 32 32 38	41 21 20 23	31 21 20 23	6 0 1 9	9 4 3 7

Key: In each box: new entrant % is in top left corner (N = 33)
NE - J1 % is in top right corner (N = 68)
J1 - J2 % is in bottom left corner (N = 71)
J3 - S1 % is in bottom right corner (N = 56)
Total N = 227

Table 2

Junior School Teachers' Use of Other Assessment Methods reported in NZCER's 1989 survey

Use / Method	PAT* tests %	Behav-iour with children %	Class tests %	Gen. ability tests %	Child age %	6-year net/ reading recov-ery %
Group children	6 0 6 27	3 3 0 4	0 0 1 7	10 7 13 11	0 1 3 4	16 28 27 30
Place children in class	0 0 1 13	9 13 15 20	0 0 0 4	16 9 17 7	19 41 34 18	0 13 15 7
Shape teaching strategies	6 0 6 7	3 0 0 2	3 0 0 5	16 13 10 5	3 1 1 2	0 3 6 4
Confirm own observations, feelings	69 60 57 48	0 4 6 2	0 0 1 0	0 6 3 7	19 7 24 18	3 7 9 5
Select child for individual help	6 0 3 5	6 13 8 9	0 1 3 4	6 9 11 9	3 8 0 5	53 49 44 25
Monitor children's progress after help	3 4 4 13	0 1 3 0	22 18 14 13	3 9 1 2	13 0 13 7	0 0 0 2
Profile for next teacher	53 56 49 48	31 32 37 39	6 10 10 18	9 6 7 11	0 0 1 1	0 1 0 0
Report to parents	41 21 38 36	0 1 1 2	6 3 1 5	0 4 3 4	0 0 0 0	28 49 42 39

Table 3

Assessment Procedures Reported by Teachers in NZCER's 1991 Survey

	New Entrants (N=65) %	Junior (N=118) %	Standard (N=111) %	Form 1&2 (N=47) %
Work samples	97	97	95	91
Running records	92	99	91	81
Behaviour observations	91	88	77	83
Primary progress records	89	89	74	53
Curriculum checkpoints	86	82	60	60
6-Year reading net	80	88	5	0
Outside tests	38	43	86	74
Other	20	12	18	17
Behavioural checkpoints	17	23	23	19
Spelling tests	14	33	91	68
IQ tests	2	2	5	9